

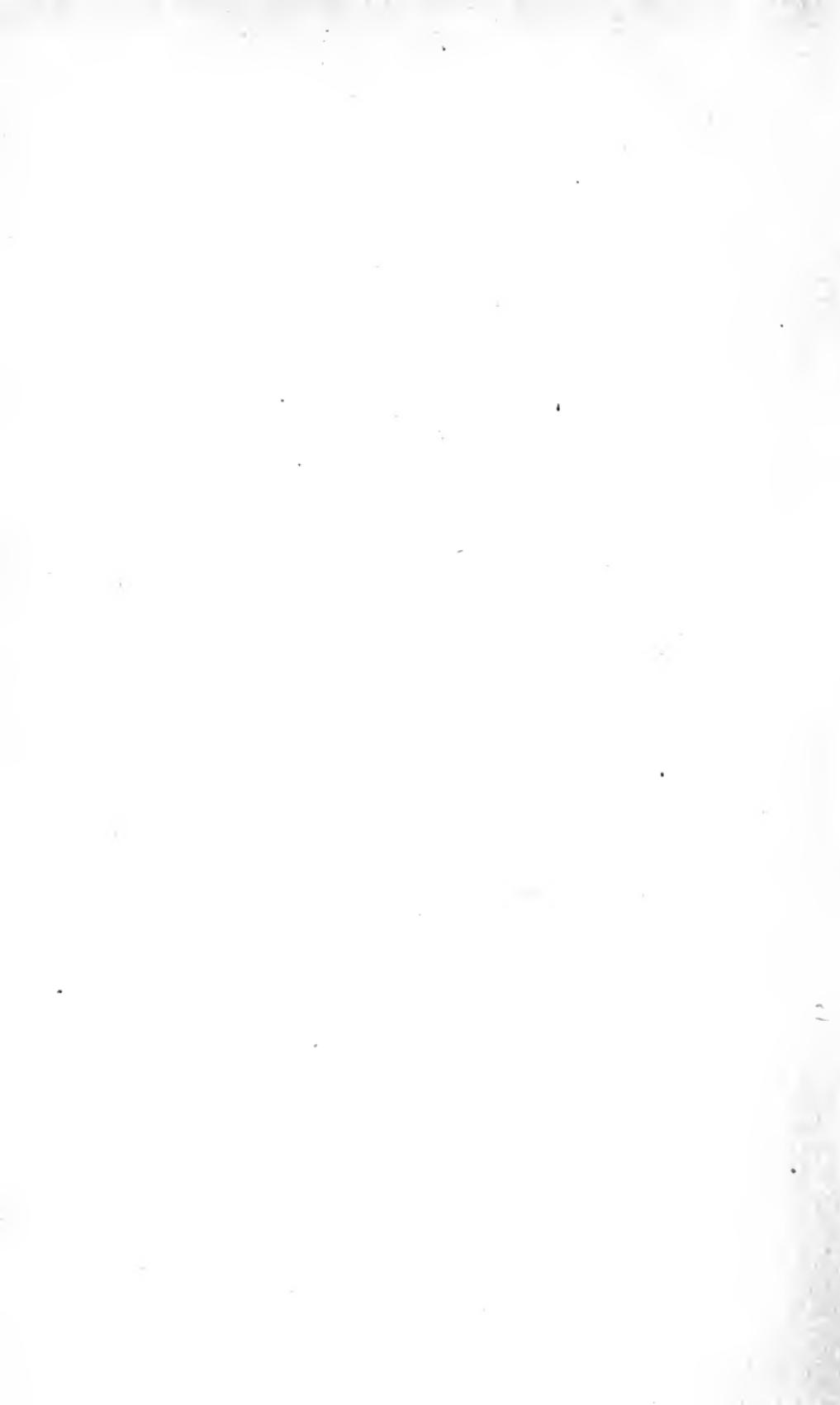


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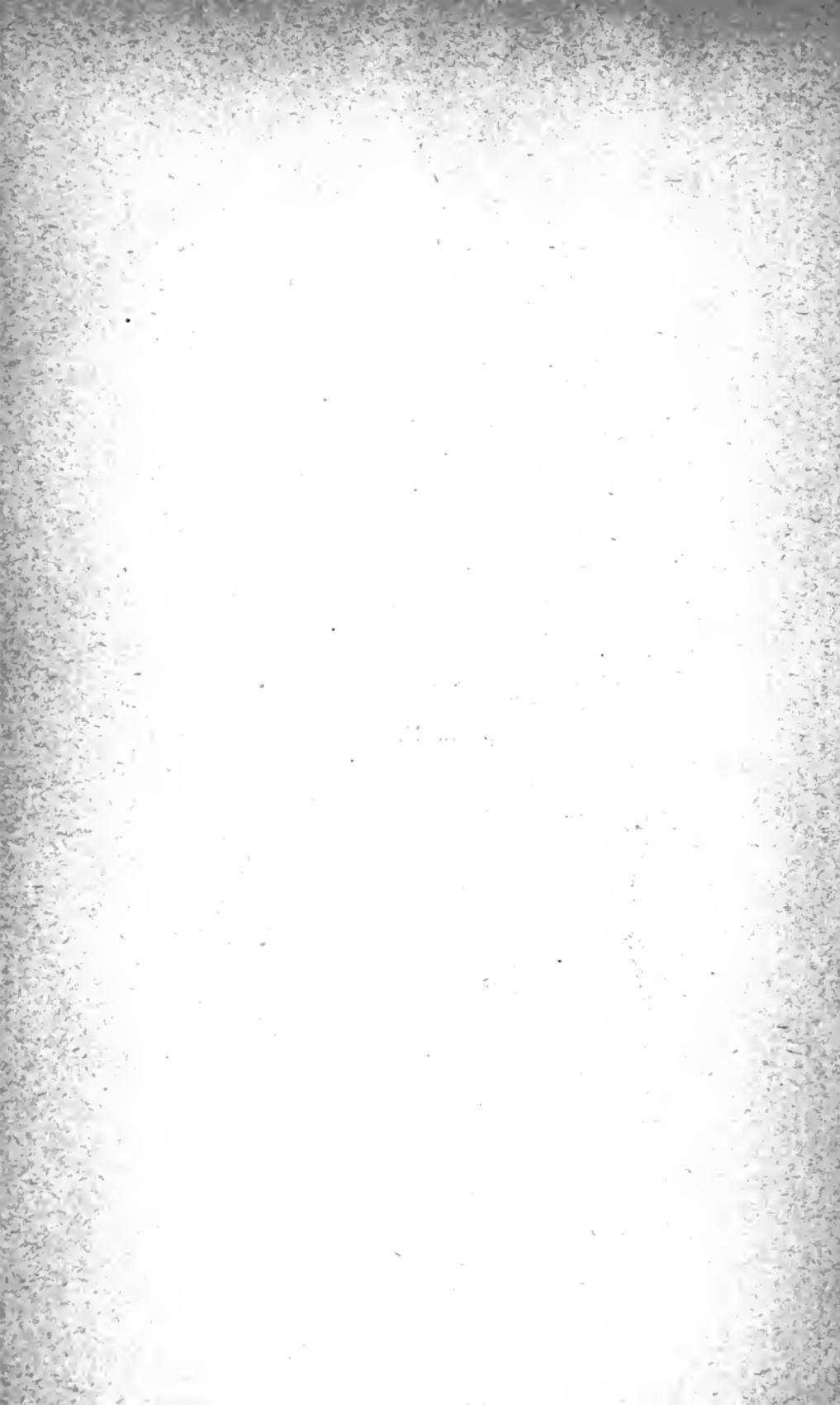






# HALF A HERO.

VOL. II.



# HALF A HERO.

BY

ANTHONY HOPE,

AUTHOR OF

"MR. WITT'S WIDOW," "A CHANGE OF AIR," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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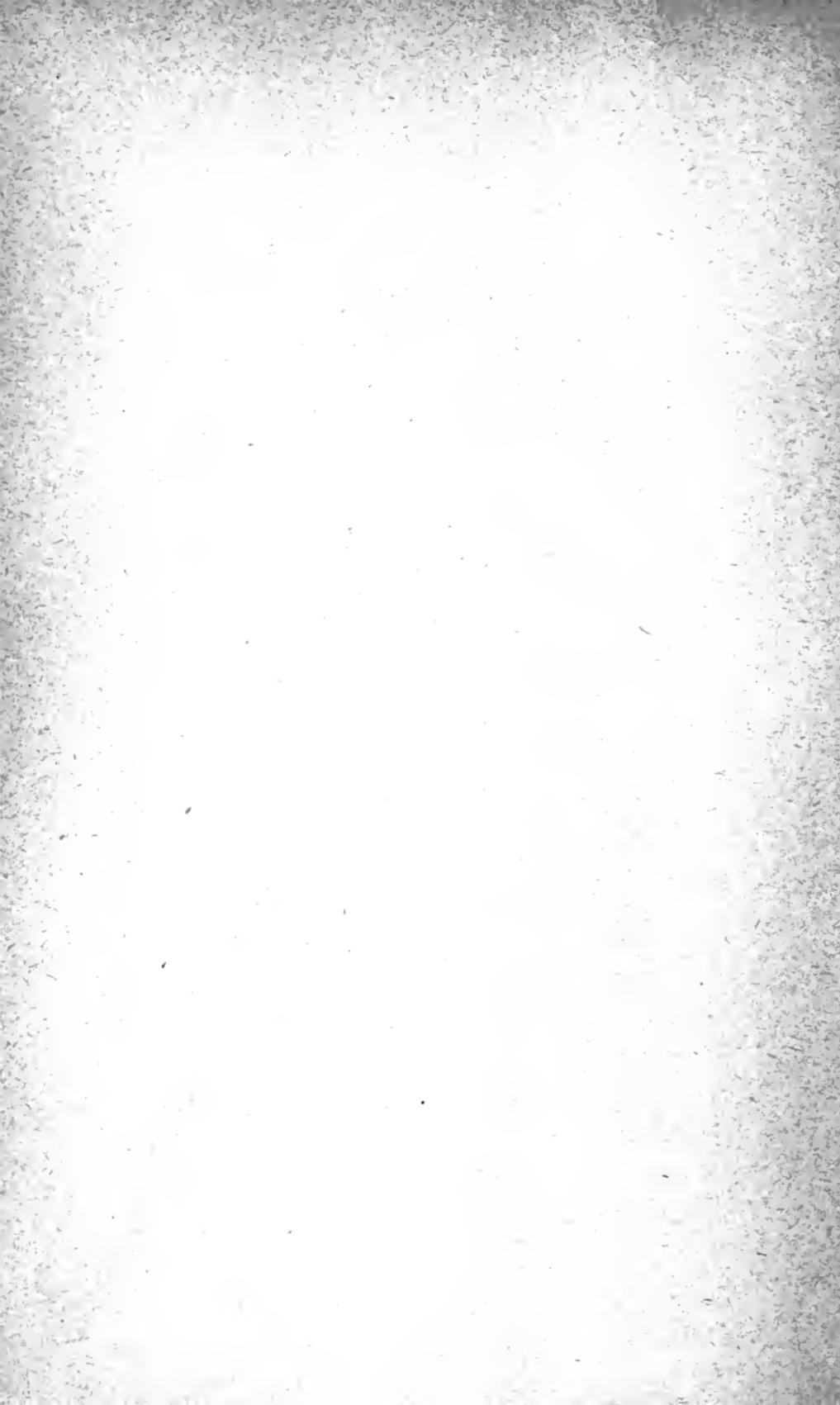


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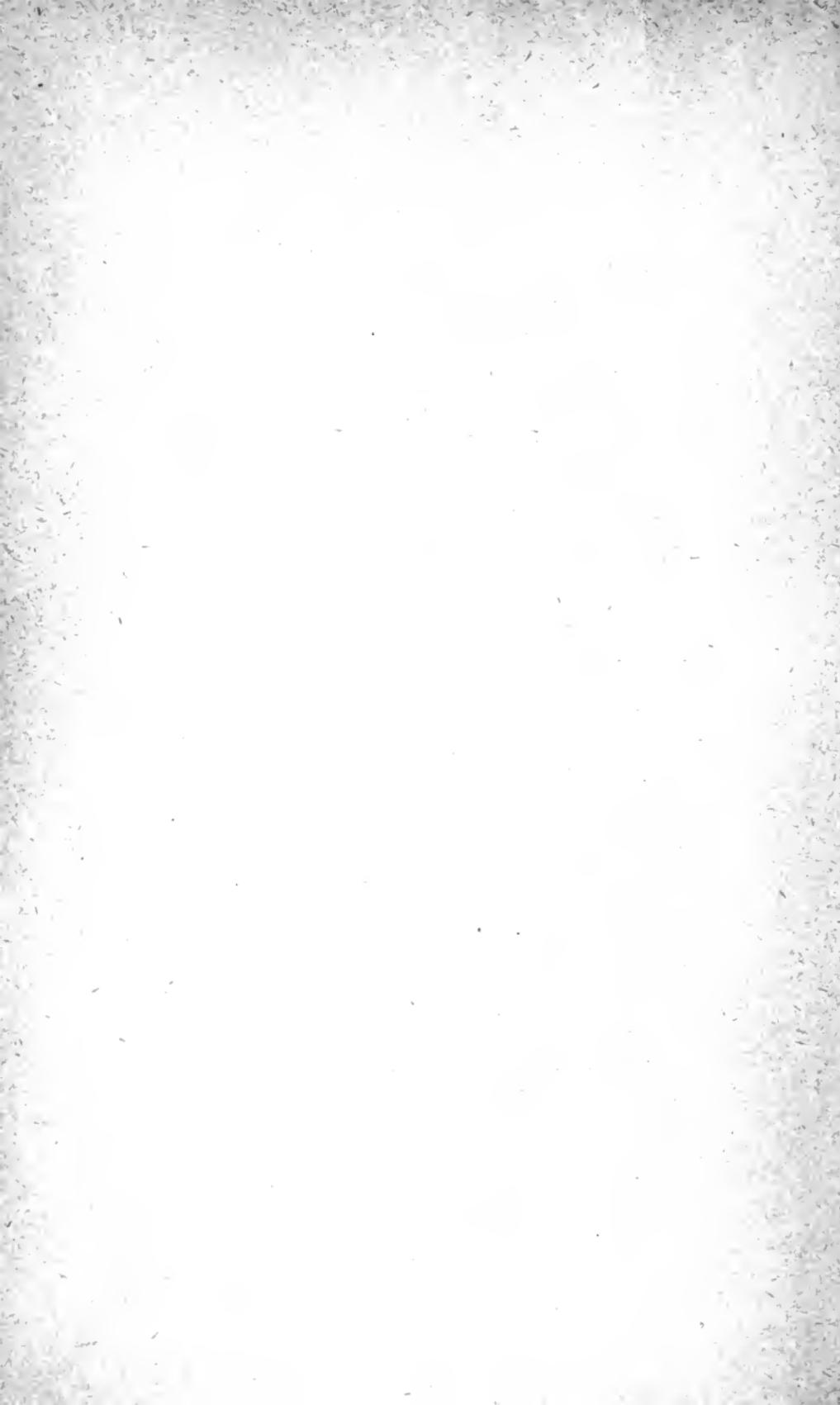
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## CHAPTER I.

### A LEAKY VESSEL.

IT was the afternoon of the next day—the Friday—and Kirton was in some stir of bustle and excitement. Groups of working-men gathered and discussed the coming meeting; carts had already passed by on their way to the Park carrying materials for platforms, and had been cheered by some of the more eager spirits. The tradesmen were divided in feeling, some foreseeing a brisk demand for things to eat and drink in the

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next few days, the more timid not denying this but doubting whether payment might not be dispensed with, and nervously enlarging on the cost of plate glass. Organisers ran busily to and fro, displaying already, some of them, rosettes of office, and all of them as much hurry as though the great event were fixed for a short hour ahead. Norburn was about the streets, looking more cheerful than he had done for a long while—the scent of battle was in his nostrils—and enjoying the luxury of prevailing on his friends not to hiss Mr. Puttock when that worthy stepped across from his warehouse to the Club about five o'clock.

Inside the Club, also, excitement was not lacking. The Houses of Parliament were deserted for this more central spot, and many members anxiously discussed their principles and their prospects, and the relation between the two. Medland's followers were not there in much force, being for the most

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part employed elsewhere, and indeed at no time much given to club-life, or suited for it, but there were many of Perry's, and still more of those who had followed Puttock, or were reported to be about to follow Coxon, and among them the members for several divisions in and near Kirton. These last, feeling that all the stir was largely for their benefit and on their account, were in a fluster of self-consciousness and apprehension, and very loud in their condemnation of the Premier's unscrupulous tactics.

"Surely the Governor can't approve of this sort of thing," said one.

"Is it *legal*, Sir John?" asked another of the Chief Justice, who had come in from court and was taking a cup of tea.

"It's mere bullying," exclaimed a third, catching Kilshaw's sympathetic eye.

"We'll not be bullied," answered that gentleman.

“ Every right-feeling and respectable man is with us, from the Governor——”

“ The Governor? How do you know?” burst from half-a-dozen mouths.

“ I do know. He’s furious with Medland, partly for doing the thing at all, partly for not telling him sooner. He thinks Medland took advantage of his civility yesterday and paraded him in the Park as on his side, while all the time he never said a word about this move of his.”

“ Ah!” said everybody, and Coxon, who knew nothing about the matter, endorsed Kilshaw’s account with a significant nod.

“ It’s a gambler’s last throw,” declared Puttock. “ Honestly, I’m ashamed to have been so long in finding out his real character.”

Some one here weakly defended the Premier.

“ After all,” he said, “ there’s nothing wrong in a public meeting, and perhaps that’s all——”

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Puttock overbore him with a solemnly emphasised reiteration—

“A discredited gambler’s last throw.”

“It’s Jimmy Medland’s last throw, anyhow,” added Kilshaw. “I’ll see to that.”

“Look! There he is!” called a man in the bow-window, and the company crowded round to look.

Medland was walking down the street side by side with a short, thick-set man, whose close-cut, stiff, black hair, bright black eyes, and bristly chin-tip gave him a foreign look. The man seemed to be giving explanations or detailing arrangements, and Medland from time to time nodded assent.

“Who’s that wit’ him?” asked Puttock.

The desired information came from a young fellow in the Government service.

“I know him,” he said, “because he applied to

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me for a certificate of naturalisation a month or two ago. François Gaspard he calls himself—heaven knows if it's his real name. He's a Frenchman, anyhow, and, I rather fancy, not a voluntary exile."

"Ah!" exclaimed Kilshaw, "what makes you think that?"

"Oh, I had a little talk with him, and he said he'd been kept too long out of his country to care about going back now, although the door had been opened at last."

"An amnesty, you suppose?"

"I thought so. And I happen to know he's very active among the political clubs here."

"Oh, that explains Medland being with him," said Kilshaw. "Some Communist or Socialist probably."

Attention being thus directed to the stranger, one or two of the Kirton politicians present recollected having encountered him in the course of

their canvassings, and bore witness to the influence which he wielded among the extreme section of the labouring men. His presence with Medland was considered to increase appreciably the threatening aspect of affairs.

“One criminal in his Cabinet,” said Mr. Kilshaw, with scornful reference to Norburn, “and arm-in-arm down the street with another. We’re getting on, aren’t we, Chief Justice?”

“I have seen too many criminals,” answered Sir John, “to think badly of a man merely because he commits an offence against the law.” The Chief Justice did not intend to be drawn into any exhibition of partisanship.

The occupants of the Club window continued to watch the Premier until he parted from his companion with a shake of the hand, and, as it seemed, a last emphatic word, and turned to Norburn, who was claiming his attention.

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Now the last emphatic word whose unknown purport stirred much curiosity in the Club, carried a pang of disappointment to François Gaspard, for it was “Mind, no sticks,” and it swept away François’ rapturous imaginings of the thousands of Kirton armed with a forest of sturdy cudgels, wherewith to terrify the *bourgeoisie*. Still, François had made up his mind to trust Jimmy Medland, in spite of sundry shortcomings of faith and practice, and having sworn by his *foi*—which, to tell the truth, was an unsubstantial sanction—to obey his leader, he loyally, though regrettably, promised that there should be no sticks; for, “If sticks appear,” the Premier had said, “I shall not appear, that’s all, Mr. Gaspard.”

The English illogicality which hung obstinately round even such gifted men as Medland and *le jeune* Norburn, so oppressed François—who could not see why, if you might hint at cudgels in the

background, you should not use them—that, on his way to his next committee, he turned into a tavern to refresh his spirit. The room was fairly full, and he found, the centre of an interested group, an acquaintance of his, Mr. Benham. François imported no personal rancour into his politics ; he hated whole classes with a deadly enmity, but he was ready to talk to or drink or gossip with any of the individuals composing them, without prejudice of course to his right, or rather duty, of obliterating them in their corporate capacity at the earliest opportunity, or even removing them one by one, did his insatiable principles demand the sacrifice. He had met Benham several times, since the latter had taken to frequenting music-halls and drinking-shops, and had enjoyed some argument with him, in which the loss of temper had been entirely on Benham's side. François gave his order, sat down, lit his cigarette, and listened to his

friend's denunciation of the Government and its works.

Presently the company, having drunk as much as it wanted or could pay for, or being weary of Benham's philippic, went its various ways, and François was left alone with his opponent. Benham had been consuming more small glasses of cognac than were good for him, and had reached the boastful and confidential stage of intoxication. He ranged up beside François, besought that unbending though polite man to eschew his evil ways, and hinted openly at the folly of those who pinned their faith on the Premier.

"He does not go all my way," responded François, with a smile and a shrug, "but he goes part. Well, we will go that part together."

Benham leant over him and whispered huskily, bringing his fist down on the counter—

“I can crush him, and I will.”

“My dear friend !” murmured François. “ See ! Do not drink any more. It destroys the generally excellent balance of your mind.”

“ Ah, you may laugh, but I can do it.”

François used the permission ; he laughed gaily and freely.

“ All your party tries,” said he, “ and it does not do it. And you will do it alone ! Ah, *par exemple !* ”

His cool scepticism unloosed Benham’s tongue, when an eager curiosity might have revived his prudence and set a seal on his lips. He had chafed at being thought a nobody so long : Kilshaw’s injunctions against gossip had been so hard to follow : he could not resist trying what startling effect a hint would have.

“ I know enough to ruin him,” he whispered, and something in his look or tone convinced François

that he believed what he said. "Yes, and I'm going to do it. Others have got the money and 'll back me—I've got the information. We shall ruin him, Mr. G-Gaspard, we shall drive him from the country, and where'll your precious party, and your precious schemes, and your precious meetings be then? Tell me that!"

"He would be a great loss," remarked François calmly. "But, come, what is this great thing that is to ruin him?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

"Eh, my friend, immensely!" smiled François, who spoke the mere truth, for all he took care to speak it very carelessly.

"I'll tell you this much, it's not a political matter—it's a private matter, and a public man's private character is everything."

"You think so? To me, it is not a great thing, so that he will do what I wish."

Benham smiled knowingly as he answered, with a wink,

“At any rate, most people think so. And I'll tell you what, Gaspard, I hate that fellow. He's wronged me—me, I tell you, and, by God, he shall smart for it !”

“Oh, if it is a personal quarrel,” murmured François, with the air of not desiring to intrude in a matter which concerned two gentlemen alone.

“Every one 'll know it in a few days,” said Benham, “and then Mr. Medland's bust up, and all the lot of you with him. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, friend Gaspard.”

“And at present no one knows it but you ?”

If Benham had answered truly he would have been wise, but his vaunting mind persuaded him not to diminish his importance by confessing that he shared his secret with any one. After

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all, it was all his secret, though Kilshaw had bought it..

“Not a soul alive!” he answered, rising to go.

“Ah, then yours is a life valuable to your party. Wrap up, my friend, wrap up. It is chilly outside.”

He buttoned Benham’s coat for him with friendly solicitude, besought him not to get run over—a caution rather necessary—and started him on his way. Then he sat down again, ordered a cup of coffee, and smoked another cigarette.

“Decidedly,” he said at last, “it would be a thousand pities if a creature like that were allowed to do any harm to the good Medland. Surely it would not be right to suffer that?”

And he sat thinking, and becoming more and more sure whither the finger of duty pointed, until some comrades came and carried him off to take the chair at an organising committee, where

he made a very temperate speech, and announced that he should regard every one who carried a stick on Sunday as intentionally guilty of the grossest incivility to him, François Gaspard, and as an enemy to the cause to boot.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MAN.

IN arriving at the bold decision which had caused so much anger and alarm to his enemies, and some searchings of heart among many who still ranked themselves as his friends, the Premier had been moved by more than one motive. The sinister design of overawing the Legislature by the fear of physical force and armed attack did not form part of his intentions, but he did intend and desire what, to a man trained in the traditions of Sir Robert's school, was hardly less unconstitutional and wrong. Through the machinery of his

great gatherings, it was to be plainly intimated to the members what course their constituents and masters willed them to follow. He proposed to take every precaution against riot—and the necessary measures fell within the sphere of his own official duties as Chief Secretary; but he was willing and eager that every form of suasion and threat, short of the cudgels for which François Gaspard pined, should be brought to bear on his renegade followers. And, in the second place, it was a vital object to him to probe as deep as he could into the secrets of the popular mind. In six months the life of the Legislative Assembly would expire by effluxion of time: at any moment before he had a right to demand a dissolution, provided that he could convince the Governor of the probability of his coming back with a majority; thus, if the meetings could not avert defeat, they would, he hoped, teach him what course to follow

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in face of it. Lastly, he anticipated a renewal of energy and confidence in his own followers as the result of an outward manifestation of the support which he believed the masses of the electors accorded to his policy. His plans ignored the mine which was always beneath his feet. He had not forgotten it: it was constantly present to his mind with its menace of sudden explosion, but he was driven to disregard a chance that was entirely incalculable. He could not discern the mind of Benham, or of the man who pulled the strings to which Benham danced, accurately enough to forecast when the moment of attack would come. He felt sure that nothing short of the surrender and renunciation of all his policy could avert the blow—perhaps not even that would serve; if so, the blow must fall, when and where it would; for, whatever its effect on his position or his party, it would not leave him so powerless or so humbled

in his own eyes as a voluntary submission to the terms his enemies chose to dictate.

The alternative of surrender would never have crossed his mind, had he been able to think only of the political side of the matter. But there was another, on which Benham's threats played with equal force. The episode of Dick Derosne's banishment had opened his eyes more fully to what the revelation might mean to his daughter; for, when he thought over the abrupt end that had been put to that romance, he could hardly fail to connect it with Benham or with Kilshaw. He shrank from the exposure to Daisy which he would have to undergo, and from the pain which he was doomed to inflict on her. Long years, no less than his own mode of thought, had veiled from him the character of what he would have to avow; the thing took on a new aspect when he forced himself to hear it as it would strike a

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daughter's ears. And, by this time, he was conscious—he could no longer affect to himself to be unconscious—that the blow which was to fall on Daisy would strike another with equal, perhaps greater, severity. He might remind himself, as he did over and over again, of the improbability, nay, the absurdity of what had happened ; he might tell himself that he was no longer young, that time had robbed him of anything that could catch a girl's fancy, that the gulf of birth, associations, and surroundings yawned wide between. His own experience and insight into temperament rose up and contradicted him, and Alicia Derosne's face drove the truth into his mind. Seeking for a hero, she had strangely, almost comically, he thought, made one of him. Hero-worship, shutting out all criticism, had led her on till she made of him, a man whose life bore no close scrutiny; a battered politician, half visionary, half demagogue (for he

did not spare himself in his thoughts)—till she had made of him an ideal statesman and a man worthy of all she had to give. A swift and gentle disenchantment was the best that could be wished for her: so he told himself, but he did not wish it. Time had not altogether changed him, and a woman's smile was to him still a force in his life, as much as it had been, or almost, when it led the boy of twenty-three to do all those rash and wrong things long ago. He could not bear to shut the door: dreaming of impossible transformations of obstinate facts, he drifted on, excusing himself for doing nothing by telling himself that there was nothing he could do.

Mr. Kilshaw's information as to the Governor's attitude had not been entirely incorrect, but, after an interview with the Premier, in which the latter explained his action, Lord Eynesford did not see that more was required than a temperately ex-

pressed surprise and a hinted disapproval of the course adopted. He declined his wife's invitation to regard the matter in the most serious light, or to attribute any heinous offence to the Premier, contenting himself with remarking that Medland had a more powerful motive to maintain order than any one else; he also ventured to suggest that the best way of considering the question was not through a mist of prejudice against the Premier and all his belongings.

"Whatever you may do, Mary," he said, "I must keep the private and public sides separate."

"That's just what you don't do," retorted his wife—let it be added that they were alone. "The man has got round you as he gets round everybody."

"You, at least, seem safe so far," laughed the Governor. "Aren't you content with your triumph in the matter of Dick?"

"I heard from him to-day. He wants to come back."

Dick had obtained leave to visit Australia, instead of going home, and was therefore within comparatively easy distance of New Lindsey.

"Oh, I think we'll wait a bit."

"He seems to be having a splendid time, but he says he's lonely without us all."

"How touching!" remarked Lord Eynesford sceptically.

"Willie, be just to him. I was thinking how nice it would be if Alicia could join him for a little while. She's looking pale and wants a change."

"Does she want to go?"

"Well, I don't know."

"Haven't you asked her?"

"No, dear."

Lord Eynesford knew his wife's way. He rose and stood with his back to the fireplace.

"You'll be sending me away next, Mary," he remarked. "What's wrong with Alicia? She doesn't show signs of relenting about your friend Coxon, does she? If so, she shall go by the next boat, if I have to exert the prerogative."

"Mr. Coxon? Oh, dear, no! Poor man! There's no danger from him."

"What's in the wind then?"

"She's too intimate with these Medlands."

"My dear Mary! Forgive me, but you're in danger of becoming a monomaniac. The Medlands are not lepers."

Lady Eynesford shut her lips close and made no answer.

"What harm can they do her?" pursued the Governor. "Daisy's a nice girl, and Medland—well, the worst he can do is to make her a Radical, and it doesn't matter two straws what she is."

Lady Eynesford's foot tapped on the floor.

"I suppose you'll laugh at me," she said.  
"Indeed it's absurd enough to make any one  
laugh, but, Willie, I'm not quite sure that Alicia  
isn't too much——"

The sentence was cut short by the entrance of  
Alicia herself.

"Ah! Al!" cried the Governor. "Come here.  
Would you like to join Dick in Australia?"

Alicia started.

"He says he's lonely, and I thought it would  
be such a nice trip for you," added Lady  
Eynesford.

"Dick lonely! What nonsense! It only means  
he wants to come back, Mary."

Dick's pathos was evidently a broken reed.  
Lady Eynesford let it go, and said,

"Anyhow, you might take advantage of his being  
there to see Australia."

"I don't want to see Australia," answered Alicia. "I much prefer New Lindsey."

"You don't jump at Mary's proposal?"

"I utterly decline," laughed Alicia, and, taking the book she had come in search of, she went out.

"You see. She won't go," remarked Lady Eynesford.

"I never thought she would. What were you going to say when she came in?"

Lady Eynesford rose and stood by her husband.

"Willie," she said, "what is it about the Medlands? I'm tired of not knowing whether there is anything or whether there isn't."

"I don't know, my dear. There's some gossip, I believe," said Lord Eynesford discreetly.

"Do you know what Mrs. Puttock said to Eleanor? Eleanor ought to have told me at once, but she only did last night. Eleanor asked something about his wife, and Mrs. Puttock said, 'For

my part, I don't believe he ever had a wife.'" Lady Eynesford repeated the all-important sentence with scrupulous accuracy.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the Governor. "That was what—" He checked himself before Kilshaw's name could leave his lips.

"Yes? Now, Willie, if that's true or—or anything like it, you know, is it right for Alicia to be constantly with Daisy Medland and—and in and out of the house, you know?"

The Governor looked grave. The thing was tangible enough now, and demanded to be dealt with more urgently than it ever had before.

"It's a pity Eleanor didn't speak sooner," he said.

"She thought less of it because Mrs. Puttock is a vulgar old gossip."

"Yes; but I'm afraid there may be something in it. Why did Eleanor tell you now?"

"Because I was speaking to her about the way

Mr. Medland monopolised Alicia in the Park the other afternoon."

"Oh, that was my fault."

"It makes no difference how it came about. Willie, she had eyes and ears for no one else," and Lady Eynesford's voice became very earnest.

"But it's preposterous, Mary. You must be wrong. There couldn't possibly be anything of the kind."

"You know the sort of girl she is," his wife went on. "She's—well, she's easily caught by an idea, and rather romantic, and—really, dear, we ought to be careful."

"I can't believe it. If it's true, Medland has treated me very badly."

"What does he care?" asked Lady Eynesford. "How I wish she would go away! Nothing I say seems to make any impression on her."

“Perhaps Medland has noticed nothing, even if you’re right about Alicia.”

“He couldn’t help noticing.”

“What? Do you mean she makes it——?”

“I don’t want to say anything unkind, but—well, yes, I’m afraid she does.”

The Governor took a pace along the room.

“Upon my word,” he exclaimed impatiently, “the way we get mixed up with these people is absurdly awkward. First there’s Dick——”

“That’s nothing to this. Dick was never really serious, and Alicia’s always serious, if she thinks about a thing at all.”

“Well, well, of course it must be stopped. What are you going to do?”

“She must be told,” said Lady Eynesford.

“I won’t tell her.”

“Then I must.”

“I wonder if you’re not wrong after all.”

"Oh, watch them!" retorted Lady Eynesford, and, leaving her husband, she sought Alicia and invited her to come and have a talk in the verandah.

Alicia, when thus summoned, was sitting with Eleanor Scaife, and they were both watching Captain Heseltine's fox terrier jump over a walking-stick under his master's tuition. It was a suitable enough amusement for a hot day; and it was engrossing enough to prevent Eleanor raising her eyes at the sound of Lady Eynesford's voice. In fact, she was not over and above anxious to meet that lady's glance. Eleanor had, in the light of recent events, grown rather doubtful of the wisdom of her wonderful discretion, and Lady Eynesford had intimated, with her usual clearness of statement, a decided opinion that not Eleanor, but she herself was the proper person to judge what should and should not be told to Alicia.

She had enforced her moral by hinting at very distressing consequences which might follow on Eleanor's unfortunate reticence.

"I sometimes think," Elcanor remarked to Heseltine, when Alicia had left them, "that perfect openness and candour are always best."

Captain Heseltine lowered the walking-stick and looked at her with an air of expectancy.

"It saves so much misunderstanding, if you tell everybody everything right out," continued Eleanor.

"For my part," returned Heseltine, with an earnestness which he rarely displayed, "I differ utterly. I've never in my life told anybody anything without being sorry I hadn't held my tongue."

"Oh, you mean your private affairs."

"Well, and you? Oh, I see. You only mean other people's. Agreed, agreed! Perfect openness and candour about them by all means!"

"I am quite serious. One never knows how much harm may be done by concealing them."

"Got a murder on your conscience?"

"Oh, not exactly," sighed Eleanor.

"You're like that chap Kilshaw. He's always talking as if he had something awful up his sleeve."

"Perhaps he has."

As Eleanor said this, she jumped up and ran to meet Alicia, whom she saw coming towards her. Lady Eynesford had wasted no time over her task.

The Captain, being left alone, did the appropriate thing. He soliloquised.

"She'd have told me in another half-minute," said he, with a chuckle. "It was choking her. Yet she's a sensible one as they go."

Whom or what class he meant by "they" it is merciful to his ignorant prejudices to leave unrevealed.

## CHAPTER III.

BY AN OVERSIGHT OF SOCIETY'S.

FRANÇOIS GASPARD was a pleasant and cheerful man, good company, and genial to his neighbours and comrades, but it may be doubted whether Society had not made a grave mistake in not hanging him at the earliest opportunity. In his younger days he had lived in perpetual warfare against Society, its institutions and constitutions—a warfare that he carried on without scruple and without quarter: he would have had no cause for complaint had he been dealt with on this basis of his own choosing. Society, however, had chosen

to fancy that it could reform François, or, failing that, could keep him alive and yet harmless. Thanks to this sanguine view, he found himself, at the age of forty-five, a free man in New Lindsey ; and, thinking that he and his native country had had about enough of one another, he had enrolled himself as a subject of her Majesty, and had plunged into the affairs of his new home with his usual energy. François was not indeed quite the man he had been in his palmy time, his nerve was not so good, and his life was more comfortable, and therefore not so lightly to be risked ; but he had made no renunciations, and often regretted that New Lindsey was a barren soil, wherein the seed he sowed bore little fruit. He could not be happy without a secret society, and that he had established in Kirton ; but it was, he ruefully admitted, hardly more than a toy, a mockery, the merest *simulacrum*. The members displayed no

alacrity ; they were but five all told, besides himself: a bookseller's assistant, a watchmaker (he was a German, but the larger cause harmonised all differences), two artisans, and—what is either natural or strange, according to one's estimation of parliamentary government—a doorkeeper in the Houses of Parliament. They used to meet at Gaspard's lodgings, regret, in tones as loud as prudence permitted, the abuses of the *status quo*, spend a social evening, and return to the outer world with a tickling sense of mystery and potential destructiveness. Gaspard held the very lowest opinion of them ; he acknowledged that the “propaganda by action” took small root in New Lindsey, and when it came into his head that Mr. Benham was worse than superfluous, he admitted with a shrug the great difficulties that lay in the way of removing his acquaintance. A man could not do everything by himself, the matter was after

all not very pressing, and he almost made up his mind to let Mr. Benham live. Such was the chain of his reflections, and if Society had clearly realised the way he looked at such things, it can hardly be supposed that Gaspard would have been left unhang'd.

Nevertheless, almost academic as the question was, Gaspard indulged his humour by hinting to his associates that, in certain contingencies, there might be work for their hands. He would not be more explicit, for he was distrustful of them; but this vague hint was quite enough to cause some perturbation. The bookseller's assistant turned rather pale, and expressed a preference for waiting till one final, decisive, and overwhelming blow could be struck. He was understood to favour a wholesale massacre at Government House, but reminded his hearers of the dangers of hasty action. The watchmaker was strong on the

division of functions: one man was valuable in counsel, another in the field ; he belonged, he said, to the former category. The artisans smiled broadly over their drink, and openly declared that the President must "give 'em a lead." The door-keeper reinforced this suggestion by reminding them that he was a husband and father, whereas Gaspard was a bachelor. All united in asking for further information, and were annoyed when Gaspard referred them to the rule governing such associations as theirs, namely, that the member to carry out the deed, if resolved upon, should be designated before the nature of the deed was discussed, or its desirability finally decided. If this were not so, he pointed out, a member's opinion on the merits of the scheme might be biassed by the knowledge that he would, if fate so willed, have to carry it out. According to his rule, the designated member had no vote.

“Not know who it is?” exclaimed the door-keeper. “Why, a man might be asked to take off his own brother!”

“Perfectly,” smiled Gaspard. “It is to avoid any painful conflict of duties that the rule exists.” He looked round the table with a broader smile, and added—“Shall it be the lot?”

The feeling of the meeting was against the lot. They preferred to choose their man.

“Let’s vote by ballot,” suggested the watch-maker.

“Agreed!” cried Gaspard, and they flung folded scraps of paper into a hat.

There was one vote for the doorkeeper: it came out first, and the doorkeeper wiped a bead of sweat from his brow. But soon he smiled again; the other four were all for Gaspard, who returned thanks for the honour in a few words.

“As soon as the information is complete, I will

summon you again," he said, dismissing them, and lighting his cigarette with a chuckle of mockery. Really, it seemed impossible to do anything with these creatures, and Gaspard did not feel quite so eager as he used to be to put his own neck in the noose. If he acted, he must, probably, fly from New Lindsey, and he was very comfortable and doing very well there. No; on second thoughts he doubted if the duty of removing Mr. Benham was absolutely imperative.

Meanwhile Benham would have been much surprised to hear that his latter end was a subject of dispassionate contemplation to the little Frenchman. No subject was more remote from his own thoughts. He was in high feather, the hour was fast approaching which was to witness his triumph and his revenge; the gag would soon be taken from his mouth, and his deadly disclosure would smite Medland like a sword. His sentiment was

satisfied with the prospect, and Kilshaw took care that his pocket should have nothing to complain of. He refused indeed to provide for Benham in his own employ for obvious reasons; but he promised him a strong, though private, recommendation to an important house, in addition to the agreed price of his information, which was a thousand pounds, half to be paid in advance. The first five hundred pounds was paid on the day before the Premier's great meeting, for, if the Ministry weathered Monday's storm, the last weapon in the arsenal was to be brought into use. So said Mr. Kilshaw, still hoping to avoid the necessity, still resolute to face it if he must. Benham took his money and went his way, with one of those familiar, confidential looks and jocular speeches which filled Kilshaw's cup of disgust to the brim. Whenever the man did that sort of thing, Kilshaw was within an ace of kicking him

down-stairs and throwing away the poisoned weapon ; but he never did.

Mere chance willed that as Gaspard on Saturday evening was going home, having done a hard day's work at organising a trade procession for the next day, he should fall in with Benham. He stopped to speak, feeling an interest in all that concerned the man ; and Benham, radiant and effusive from the process of " moistening his luck," would not be satisfied till Gaspard had agreed to sup with him and at his charges.

"Oh, if you like to do a good deed to an enemy," laughed the Frenchman, letting the other seize him by the arm and lead him off ; and he thought to himself that he might as well spare so liberal a host. Might there not be other suppers in the future ? Dead men, if they told no tales, paid for no suppers either.

After the meal they had another bottle of wine,  
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and Benham called for a pack of cards. François won, and politely apologised.

“It is too bad of me,” he said, “after your hospitality, *mon cher*.”

“Oh, five pound won’t hurt me, or ten either,” cried Benham, draining his glass.

“No? Happy man!”

“I know where money comes from,” continued Benham, with a wink.

“Ah, a man who knows what you do!” retorted Gaspard. “Have you forgotten telling me—you know—about our good Medland?”

“Did I tell you? Well, I had forgotten. Who cares! It’s true—every word.”

“Oh, I don’t say it isn’t,” laughed Gaspard incredulously.

“But you don’t believe it is?”

“We can’t help our thoughts, but——” and another laugh ended his sentence.

Benham looked round. They were alone. Cautiously he drew a bag of money and a roll of notes from his pocket. For a moment he opened the bag and showed the gleam inside ; wetting his forefinger, he parted the notes for a second.

“Some one believes it,” he said, “up to five hundred pound.”

“That’s the sort of belief I’d like to inspire,” laughed Gaspard, watching the money back into its pocket with a curious eye.

“Come, you’re not drinking,” urged the hospitable Benham.

“You don’t show me the way,” untruthfully answered the guest, as Benham complacently buttoned up his coat, little imagining that his neighbour was weighing a question, very momentous to him, in the light of fresh information.

Five hundred pounds ! The duty of removing Benham began to look rather imperative again,

but from a different point of view. François had of late worked for his living, a mode of existence which seemed to him anomalous, and ill suited to his genius. Five hundred pounds meant, to a man of his frugal habits and tact in eliciting hospitality, three years' comfortable idleness. It was no doubt apparent now that Benham had already parted with his secret, and that, if anything happened to him, the secret would still remain to vex the good Medland. Gaspard regretted this ; he would have liked to combine public and private advantage in the job. But a man must not ask everything, or he may end by having to take nothing. Here sat a drunken fool with five hundred pounds ; opposite to him sat a sober sharp-wit with only five. The situation was full of suggestion. If the five hundred could be got from the fool without violence, well and good ; but really, thought Mr. Gaspard, their transference to the sharp-wit must

be effected somehow, or that sharp-wit had no title to the name.

“Care to play any more?” asked Benham.

“Not I, my friend, I have robbed you enough.”

“And about time for the luck to turn, isn’t it? Well, I don’t care! What shall we do?”

“What you will,” answered the Frenchman absently.

Benham pulled his beard, then leant forward and put a question with an intoxicated leer. A laugh of feigned reproof burst from Gaspard. Benham seemed to urge him, and at last he said,

“Oh, if you’re bent on it, I can be your guide.”

The two men left the house arm-in-arm, went down the street, and crossed Digby Square. It was late, and few people were about, but Gaspard saw one acquaintance. The doorkeeper was

strolling along on his way home, and Gaspard bade him good-night in a cheery voice as they passed him. The doorkeeper stood and watched the pair for a minute as they left the Square and turned down a narrow street which led to the poorer part of the town, and thence to the quays. He heard Gaspard's high-pitched voice and shrill laughter and, in answer, Benham's thick tones and heavy shout of drunken mirth. Once or twice these sounds repeated themselves, then they ceased ; the footsteps of the Frenchman and his companion died away in the distance. The doorkeeper went on his way, thinking with relief that Mr. Gaspard, for all his tall talk, was more at home with a bottle than with a knife or a bomb.

Notwithstanding his dissipation, Gaspard was afoot very early in the morning. It was hardly light, and the deep scratch of finger-nails on his face—it is so awkward when drunken fools wake

at the wrong minute—attracted no attention from the few people he encountered. He did not give them long to look at him, for he hurried swiftly through the streets, towards the quays where the ships lay loading their cargoes. He seemed to have urgent business to transact down there, business that would brook no delay, and that was, if one might guess from his uneasy glances over his shoulder, of a private nature. With one hand he held tight hold of something in his trousers pocket, the other rested on his belt, hard by a little revolver. In his business it is necessary to be ready for everything.

Meanwhile Mr. Benham, having no affairs to trouble him, and no more business to transact, stayed where he was.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LAST CHANCES.

AT an early hour on Sunday all Kirton seemed astir. The streets were alive with thronging people, with banners, with inchoate and still amorphous processions, with vendors of meat, drink, and newspapers. According to the official arrangements, the proceedings were not to begin till one o'clock, and, in theory, the forenoon hours were left undisturbed ; but, what with the people who were taking part in the demonstration, and those who were going to look on, and those who hoped to suck some profit to themselves out of the

day's work, the ordinary duties and observances of a Sunday were largely neglected, and Mr. Puttock, passing on his way to chapel at the head of his family, did not lack material for reprobation in the temporary superseding of religious obligations.

The Governor and his family drove to the Cathedral, according to their custom, Eleanor Scaife having pleaded in vain for leave to walk about the streets instead. Lady Eynesford declined to recognise the occasion, and Eleanor had to content herself with stealthy glances to right and left till the church doors engulfed her. The only absentee was Alicia Derosne, and she was not walking about the streets, but sitting under the verandah, with a book unopened on her knees, and her eyes set in empty fixedness on the horizon. The luxuriant growth of a southern summer filled her nostrils with sweet scents, and the wind, blowing off the sea, tempered the heat to a fresh

and balmy warmth; the waves sparkled in the sun, and the world was loud in boast of its own beauty; but poor Alicia, like many a maid before, was wondering how long this wretched life was to last, and how any one was ever happy. Faith bruised and trust misplaced blotted out for her the joy of living and the exultation of youth. If these things were true, why did the sun shine, and how could the world be merry? If these things were true, for her the sun shone no more, and the merriment was stilled for ever. So she thought, and, if she were not right, it needed a philosopher to tell her so; and then she would not have believed him, but caught her woe closer to her heart, and nursed it with fiercer tenderness against his shallow prating. Perhaps he might have told her too, that it is cruel kindness unasked to set people on a pinnacle, and, when they cannot keep foothold on that slippery height, to scorn their

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fall. Other things such an one might well have said, but more wisely left unsaid ; for cool reason is a blister to heartache, and heartache is not best cured by blisters. Never yet did a child stop crying for being told its pain was nought and would soon be gone. Yet this prescription had been Lady Eynesford's—although she was no philosopher, to her knowledge—for Alicia, and it had left the patient protesting that she felt no pain at all, and yet feeling it all the more.

“ What do you accuse me of? Why do you speak to me ? ” she had burst out. “ What is it to me what he has done or not done ? What do you mean, Mary ? ”

Before this torrent of questions Lady Eynesford tactfully retreated a little way. A warning against hasty love dwindled to an appeal whether so much friendliness, such constant meetings, either with daughter or with father, were desirable.

"I'm sure I'm sorry for the poor child," she said; "but in this world——"

"Suppose it's all a slander!"

"My dear Alicia, do they say such things about a man in his position unless there's something in them?"

"It's nothing to me," said Alicia again.

"Of course, you can do nothing abrupt; but you'll gradually withdraw from their acquaintance, won't you?"

Alicia had escaped without a promise, pleading for time to think in the same breath that she denied any concern in the matter. She was by way of thinking now, and all that Lady Eynesford had said repeated itself in her mind as she looked out on the garden and the glimpses of the town beyond. She understood now Dick's banishment, her sister-in-law's unresting hostility to the Medlands, and the reason why she had been

pressed to go to Australia. She spared a minute to grieve for Daisy, but her own sorrow would not be denied, and engrossed her again. In the solitude she had sought, she cried to herself, "Why didn't they tell me before? What's the use of telling me now?" Then she would fly back to the hope that the thing was not true, that her friends had clutched too hastily at anything which would save her from what they dreaded, and, she confessed to herself, rightly dreaded. No, she would not believe it yet; and, if it were not true, why should she not be happy? Why should she not, even though she did what Dick had not dared to do, and what, when Coxon asked her, she had laughed at for an absurdity?

There began to be more movement outside the gates. The first note of band-music was wafted to her ear, and the roll of wheels announced the return of the church-goers. She roused herself and went

to meet them. They were agog with excitement, partly about the meeting, partly about the murder. While Eleanor was trying to tell her of the state of popular feeling, the Governor seized her arm and began to detail the story of the discovery.

“ You remember the man ? ” he asked. “ He was at our flower-show—had a sort of row with Medland, you know. Well, he’s been found murdered (so the police think) in a low part of the town ! The woman who keeps the house found him. He didn’t come down in the morning, and, as she couldn’t make him hear, she forced the door, and found him with his throat cut.”

“ Awful ! ” shuddered Lady Eynesford. “ He looked such a respectable man too.”

“ Ah, I fancy he’d gone a bit to the bad lately—taken to drinking and so on.”

“ He was a friend of Mr. Kilshaw’s, wasn’t he ? ” asked Alicia.

"A sort of hanger-on, I think. Anyhow, there he was dead, and with his pockets empty."

"Perhaps he killed himself," she suggested.

"They think not. They've arrested the woman, but she declares she knows nothing about it!"

"Poor man!" said Alicia ; and, at another time she might have thought a good deal about the horrible end of a man whom she had known as an acquaintance. But, as it was, she soon forgot him again, and, leaving the rest, returned to her solitary seat.

In the town, the news of the murder was but one ruffle more on the wave of excitement, and not a very marked one. Few people knew Benham's name, and when the first agitation following on the discovery of the body died away and the onlookers found there was no news to be had, they turned away to join the processions or to stare at them. The police were left to pursue their investigations

in peace, and they soon reached a conclusion. The landlady of the house where Benham died lived alone, save for the occasional presence of her son : he was away at work in an outlying district, and she had been the only person in the house that night. She let beds to single men, she said, and the night before two men had arrived, one the worse for drink. They had asked for adjoining rooms. As they went up-stairs, she had heard the one who had been drinking say to the other, "What are you bringing me here for ? This isn't the place for what I want." His companion, the shorter of the two, whom she thought she would know again, had answered—"All in good time ; you go and lie down, and I'll fetch what you want." Soon after, the short one came down and asked if she had any brandy ; she gave him a bottle half full and he went up-stairs again. She heard voices raised as if in dispute for a few minutes, and one

of them—she could not say which—said something which sounded like “ Well, finish the drink first, and then I’ll go.” Silence followed, at least she could not hear any more talking ; and presently, it not being her business to spy on gentlemen, she went to bed, and knew nothing more till she woke at seven o’clock. Going up-stairs, she found one door open and the room empty, not the room the two men had been in together, but the other. The second door was locked, and she did not knock ; gentlemen often slept late. At half-past ten she ventured to knock, got no answer, knocked again and again, and finally, with the help of the man from next door, broke the lock and found the taller of the two men dead on the bed. She had at once summoned the police ; and that, she concluded, was all she knew about the matter, and she was a respectable, hard-working woman, a widow who could produce her marriage cer-

tificate in case any person present desired to inspect it.

The Superintendent listened to her protestations of virtue with an ironical smile, told her the police knew her house very well, frightened her wholesomely, took down her very vague description of the missing man, and kept her in custody ; but he did not seriously doubt the truth of her story, and, if it were true, the man he wanted was evidently the sober man, the shorter man, who had introduced his friend to the house on a pretext, had called for drink, and vanished in the early morning, leaving a dead man behind him. Who was this man ? Where did he come from ? Had he been missing since last night ? On these inquiries the Superintendent launched several intelligent men, and then was forced for the time to turn his attention to the business of the day.

To search a large town for a missing man takes time, and the searchers did not happen to fall in with Company B of Procession 3, which at one o'clock had mustered in Digby Square, prepared to march to the Public Park. Had they done so, it might or might not have seemed to them worth noticing that Company B of Procession 3, which was composed of carpenters and joiners, had missed some one, namely the officer whom they called their "Marshal," and who was to have ordered their ranks and marched at their head; and the name of their Marshal was none other than François Gaspard. The Superintendent himself was keeping watch over Company B, but, in a professionally Olympian scorn of processions, he was far from asking or caring to know who the Marshal was, and indeed, if he had known, he would scarcely have drawn such a lightning-quick inference as that the missing Marshal and the missing murderer

were one and the same. So Mr. Gaspard's absence was passed over with a few curses on his laziness, or, from the more charitable, a surmise that there had been a misunderstanding, and Company B, having appointed a new Marshal, went on its way.

One demonstration of the public will is much like another in the shape it takes and the incidents it produces. This Sunday's was, however, as friends and foes agreed, remarkable not only for the numbers who took part, but still more for the spirit which animated it, and when the Premier and his colleagues made their appearance on the great platform there was no room to doubt that somehow, by his gifts or his faults, his policy or his demagogic arts, his love of humanity or his adroit wooing of popularity, Medland held a position in the eyes of the common people of the capital which had seldom or never been equalled in the history

of the Colony. He had caused them to be called together in order to raise their enthusiasm, and to elicit from them a visible, unmistakable pledge of support. But, when he stood before them, bare-headed, in vain beckoning for silence, their cries and cheers told him that his task was rather to moderate than to stir up, and the first part of his speech was a somewhat laboured proof of the consistency of gatherings of that nature with the proper independence of representative assemblies. The people heard him through this argument in respectful silence, clapping their hands when, at the end of it, he paused before he passed to the second part of his speech. At the first sign of attack, at the first quietly drawn contrast between what the seceders had promised and what they were doing, his audience was a changed one. Fierce murmurs of assent and groans became audible now, and when Medland, caught by the

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contagion that spread to him from his listeners, gave rein to his feelings, and launched into a passionate declaration that, to his mind, the liberty claimed for members did not mean liberty to betray those who had trusted them, the murmurs and groans rose into one tumult of savage applause, and men raised both hands over their heads and shook them, as though they would have clenched every word that fell from him with a blow of the fist.

Daisy Medland sat just behind her father, exulting in his triumph, and, at every happy stroke, glancing at Norburn, and by sharing her joy with him doubling his. When the Premier had finished, and the last resolution had been carried, she ran to him, crying, "Splendid! I never heard you so good. Wasn't he splendid?" and looking so completely joyful that Medland was sure she must quite have forgotten Dick Derosne. She took his

arm, and they made their way together to a carriage which was in waiting. An escort of police surrounded it, to save the Premier from his friends, and he, with Daisy, Norburn, and Mr. Floyd, the Treasurer, got in without disturbance. The coachman drove off rapidly down the main avenue, distancing the enthusiasts who would have had the horses out of the shafts. They passed a long row of carriages, belonging to people who had not feared to come and look on from a distance, and at last, knowing the procession would go back another way, Medland bade his driver stop under the trees, and lit a cigar.

“And I wonder if it will all make any difference!” said he, puffing delightedly. He had all an old political organiser’s love for a big meeting, which does not exclude scepticism as to its value.

“Oh, you gave it ‘em finely,” said the Treasurer.

"I believe it'll frighten two or three anyhow," observed Norburn.

"I *know* we shall win to-morrow," cried Daisy, squeezing her father's arm.

"Ah! here's a special Sunday evening paper—how we encourage wickedness!" said the Premier, seeing a newsvendor approaching. "Let's see what they say of us!"

"I've seen it all for myself," remarked Daisy, and she went on chattering to the other two, who were ready to talk over every incident of the meeting, as people who have been to meetings ever are. On they went, reminding one another of the bald man in the third row who cheered so lustily, of the fat woman who had somehow got into the front row and fanned herself all the time, of rude things shouted about Messrs. Puttock and Coxon, and so forth. The Premier, listening with one ear, opened his paper; but the first thing he saw was

not about his procession. He started and looked closer, then gave a sudden, covert glance at his companions ; they were busy in talk, and, with breathless haste, he devoured the meagre details of Benham's wretched death. The end reached, he let the paper fall on his knees, lay back, and took a long pull at his cigar. He was shocked—yes, he supposed he was shocked. He had known the man, and it was shocking to think of his throat being cut ; yes, he had known him, and he didn't like to think of that. But— The Premier gave a long-drawn sigh of relief. That unknown murderer's hand had done great things for him. His daughter was safe now—anyhow, she was safe. She could never be subject to the degradation the dead man had once hinted at ; and when he thought of what the man had threatened, pity for him died out of Medland's heart. More—although Kilshaw no doubt knew something—there was a chance that

Benham had kept his own counsel, and that his employer would be helpless without his aid. Medland's sanguine mind caught eagerly at the chance, and in a moment turned it into a hope—almost a conviction. Then the whole thing would go down to the grave with the unlucky man, and not even its spectre survive to trouble him. For if no one had certain knowledge, if there were never more than gossip, growing, as time passed, fainter and fainter from having no food to feed on, would not utter silence follow at last, so that the things that had been might be as if they had never been?

“Well, what do they say about us?” asked the Treasurer.

“Oh, nothing much,” he answered, thrusting the paper behind him with a careless air. He did not want to discuss what the paper had told him.

"What's happened to-day," said Daisy, "ought to make all the difference, oughtn't it, father?"

"I hope it will," replied the Premier; but, for once in his life, he was not thinking most about political affairs.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LAW *VERSUS* RULE 3.

AMONG the many tired but satisfied lovers of liberty who sought their houses that night, while an enthusiastic remnant was still parading the streets, illuminations yet shining from windows, and weary police treading their unending beats, was the doorkeeper, who had borne a banner in Company A of Procession 1. His friend the watchmaker came with him, to have a bit of supper and exchange congratulations and fulminations. Hardly, however, had the doorkeeper pledged the cause in a first draught when his wife

broke in on his oration by handing him a letter, which she said a boy in a blue jersey had left for him about ten o'clock in the morning, just after he had started to join his company. The envelope was cheap and coarse ; there was no direction outside. The doorkeeper opened it. It was addressed to no named person and it bore no signature. It was very brief, being confined to these simple words—"You did not see me last night. Remember Rule 3."

The doorkeeper laid the letter down, with a hurried glance at his friend, whose face was buried in a mug. He knew the handwriting ; he knew who it was that he had not seen ; he remembered Rule 3, the rule that said—"The only and inevitable penalty of treachery is death." He turned white and took a hasty gulp at his liquor.

"Who brought this ?" he asked.

"I told you," answered his wife ; "a lad in a blue

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jersey ; he looked as if he might be from the harbour." She put food before them, adding as she did so—"I suppose you've been too full of your politics to hear much about the murder?"

"The murder?" exclaimed the watchmaker. The doorkeeper crumpled up his letter and stuffed it into the pocket of his coat, while his wife read to them the story of the discovery. The watchmaker listened with interest.

"Benham!" he remarked. "I never heard the name, did you?"

"You know him, Ned," said the doorkeeper's wife ; "him as Mr. Gaspard used to go about with."

By a sudden common impulse, the eyes of the two men met ; the woman went off to brew them a pot of tea, and left them fearfully gazing at one another.

"What stuff!" said the watchmaker uneasily. "It was only his blow. What reason had

he—" He paused and added, "Seen him to-day, Ned?"

"No," answered Ned, fingering his note.

"Wasn't he in the procession?"

"I didn't see him."

"When did you see him last?"

The doorkeeper hesitated.

"Night of our last committee," he whispered finally.

"Oh, there's nothing in it," said the watchmaker reassuringly. He had not a letter in his pocket.

The doorkeeper opened his mouth to speak, but seeing his wife approaching, he shut it again and busied himself with his meal.

"What was the letter, Ned?"

"Oh, about the procession," he answered.

"Then you got it too late. Who was it from?"

"If you'd give us the tea," he broke out roughly,

"and let the damned letter alone, it 'ud be a deal better."

"La, you needn't fly out at a woman so," said Mrs. Evans. "It ain't the way to treat his wife, is it, mister?"

"Mister" gallantly reproved his friend, but pleaded that they were both weary, and weary legs made short tempers. Giving them the tea, she left them to themselves; her work was not finished till three small children were safely in bed.

The sensation of having one's neck for the first time within measurable distance of a rope must needs be somewhat disquieting. The doorkeeper, in spite of his secret society doings, was a timid man, with a vastly respectful fear of the law. To talk about things, to vapour idly about them over the cups, is very different from being actually, even though remotely, mixed up in them. Ned

Evans was a man of some education : he read the papers, accounts of crimes and reports of trials ; he had heard of accessories after and before the fact. Was he not an accessory after the fact ? He fancied they did not hang such ; but if they caught him, and all that about Gaspard and the society came out, would they not call him an accessory before the fact ? The noose seemed really rather near, and in his frightened fancy, as he lay sleepless beside his snoring wife, the rope dangled over his head. The poor wretch was between the devil and the deep sea—between stern law and cruel Rule 3. He dared not toss about, his wife would ask him what ailed him ; he lay as still as he could, bitterly cursing his folly for mingling in such affairs, bitterly cursing the Frenchman who led him on into the trap and left him fast there. How could he save his neck ? And he restlessly rent the band of his coarse

night-shirt, that pressed on his throat with a horrible suggestion of what might be. Where was that Gaspard? Had he fled over the sea? Ah, if he could be sure of that, and sure that the dreaded man would not return! Or was he lurking in some secret hole, ready to steal out and avenge a violation of Rule 3? The doorkeeper had always feared the man; in the lurid light of this deed, Gaspard's image grew into a monster of horror, threatening sudden and swift revenge for disobedience or treachery. No; he must stand firm. But what of the police? Well, men sleep somehow, and at last he fell asleep, holding the band of the night-shirt away from his throat: if he fell asleep with that pressing on him, God knew what he might dream.

“It’s very lucky,” remarked the Superintendent of Police, who had a happy habit of looking at the bright side of things, to one of his subordinates,

"that this Benham seems to have had no relations and precious few friends."

"No widows coming crying about," observed the subordinate, with an assenting nod.

"Nothing known of him except that he came to Kirton a few months back, did nothing, seemed to have plenty of money, took his liquor, played a hand at cards, hurt nobody, seemingly knew nobody."

"Why, I saw him with Mr. Puttock."

"Yes; but Mr. Puttock knows nothing of him, except that he said he came from Shepherdstown. That's why Puttock was civil to him. The place is in his constituency."

"Got any idea, sir?" the subordinate ventured to ask.

The Superintendent was about to answer in the negative, when a detective entered the room.

“Well, I’ve found one missing man for you,” he said, in a satisfied tone.

“One missing man!” echoed his superior, scornfully. “In a place o’ this size I’d always find you twenty.”

The sergeant went on, unperturbed,

“François Gaspard, known as politician and agitator, didn’t go home to his lodgings in Kettle Street last night, was to have acted as Marshal in Company B of Procession 3 to-day, didn’t turn up, hasn’t turned up to-night, don’t owe any rent, hasn’t taken any clothes.”

“Oh!” said the Superintendent morosely. “Left an address?”

“Left no address, sir.”

“How did he go, and where?”

“Not known, sir.”

“Good Lord!” moaned the Superintendent, “and what’s your salary?”

The sergeant's good-humour was impregnable.

"Give me time," he said, and the sentence was almost drowned in a loud knock at the door. An instant later Kilshaw rushed in.

"What's this, Dawson?" he cried to the Superintendent; "what's this about the murder?"

"You haven't heard, sir?"

"I went out of town to avoid this infernal row to-day, and am only just back."

Dawson smiled discreetly. He could understand that the proceedings of the day would not attract Mr. Kilshaw.

"But is it true," Kilshaw went on eagerly, "that Mr. Benham has been murdered?"

"Well, it looks like it, sir," and Dawson gave a full account of the circumstances.

"And the motive?" asked Kilshaw.

"Robbery, I suppose. His pockets were empty, and according to our information he was generally

flush of money ; where he got it, I don't know."

"Ah!" said Kilshaw meditatively ; "his pockets empty ! And have you no clue ?"

"Not what you'd call a clue. Did you know the gentleman, sir ?"

Kilshaw replied by saying that Mr. Puttock had introduced Benham to him and the acquaintance had continued—it was a political acquaintance purely.

"You don't know anything about him before he came here ?"

Kilshaw suddenly perceived that he was being questioned, whereas his object had been to question.

"You say," he observed, "that you haven't got what you'd call a clue. What do you mean ?"

"You can tell Mr. Kilshaw, if you like," said the Superintendent to the sergeant, who repeated his information.

“Gaspard ! why that’s the fellow the Premier—” and Mr. Kilshaw stopped short. After a moment, he asked abruptly, “Were there any papers on the body ?”

“None, sir.”

“I suppose there’s nothing really to connect this man Gaspard with it ?”

“Oh, nothing at present, sir. Did you say you’d known the deceased before he— ?”

“If I’m called at the inquest, I shall tell all I know,” said Kilshaw, rising. “It’s not much.”

“Happen to know if he had any relations, sir ?”

“H’m. He was a widower, I believe.”

“Children ?”

“Really,” said Mr. Kilshaw, with a faint smile, “I don’t know.”

And he escaped from pertinacious Mr. Dawson with some alacrity. When he was outside, he stopped suddenly. “Shall I tell ’em to apply to

Medland?" he asked himself, with a malicious chuckle. "No, I'll wait a bit yet," and he walked on, wondering whether by any chance Mr. Benham had been done to death to save the Premier. This fanciful idea he soon dismissed with a laugh; it never entered his head, prejudiced as he was, to think that Medland himself had any hand in the matter. After all, he was a man of common sense, and he quickly arrived at a conclusion which he expressed by exclaiming,

"The poor fool's been showing his money. Who's got my five hundred now, I wonder?"

His wonderings would have been satisfied, had Aladdin's carpet or other magical contrivance transported him to where the steamship *Pride of the South* was ploughing her way through the waves, bound from Kirton to San Francisco, with liberty to touch at several South American ports. A thick-set, short man, shipped at the last moment

as cook's mate, in substitution for a truant, was lying on his back, smoking a cigarette, looking up at the bright stars, and ever and again gently pressing his hand on a little lump inside his shirt. He seemed at peace with all the world, though he was ready to be at war, if need be, and his knife, burnished and clean, lay handy to his fingers. He turned on his side and composed himself to sleep, his chest rising and falling with regular, uninterrupted breathing. Once he smiled : he was thinking of Ned Evans, the doorkeeper ; then he gave himself a little shake, closed his eyes, and forgot all the troubles of this weary world. So sleep children, so—we are told—the just : so slept M. François Gaspard, on his way to seek fresh woods and pastures new.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ALL THERE WAS TO TELL.

THE custom in New Lindsey was that every Monday during the session of Parliament the Executive Council should meet at Government House, and, under the presidency of the Governor, formally ratify and adopt the arrangements as to the business of the coming week which its members had decided upon at their Cabinet meetings. It is to be hoped that, in these days, when we all take an interest in our Empire, everybody knows that the Executive Council is the outward, visible, and recognised form of that impalpable, unrecognised, all-powerful institution, the Cabinet, consisting in

fact, though not in theory, of the same persons, save that the Governor is present when the meeting is of the Council, and absent when it is of the Cabinet—a difference of less moment than it sounds, seeing that, except in extreme cases, the Governor has little to do but listen to what is going to be done. However, forms doubtless have their value, and at any rate they must be observed ; so on this Monday morning the Executive Council was to meet as usual, although nobody knew where the Cabinet would be that time twenty-four hours. Lady Eynesford, who wanted her husband to drive her out, thought the meeting under the circumstances mere nonsense—which it very likely was—and said so, which betrayed inexperience, and Alicia Derosne asked what time it took place.

“Eleven sharp,” said the Governor, and returned to the account of the murder.

Time after time in the last few days Alicia had told herself that she could bear it no longer. At one moment she believed nothing, the next, nothing was too terrible for her to believe ; now she would fly to Australia, or home, or anywhere out of New Lindsey ; now a straightforward challenge to Medland alone would serve her turn. Sometimes she felt as if she could put the whole thing on one side ; five minutes later found her pinning her whole life on the issue of it. Under her guarded face and calm demeanour, the storm of divided and conflicting instincts and passions raged, and long solitary rambles became a necessary outlet for what she dared show to none. She shrank from seeing Medland, and yet longed to speak with him ; she felt that to mention the topic to him was impossible, and yet, if they met, inevitable ; that she would not have strength to face him, and yet could not let him go without clearing

up the mystery. She told herself at one moment that she hardly knew him, at the next that between them nothing could be too secret for utterance.

What she hoped and feared befell her that morning. She went out for a walk in the Park, and before long she met the Premier, with his daughter and Norburn. The two last were laughing and talking—their quarrel was quite forgotten now—and Medland himself, she thought, looked as though his load of care were a little less heavy. The two men explained that they were on their way—a roundabout way, they confessed—to the Council, and had seized the chance of some fresh air, while Daisy was full of stories about yesterday's triumph, that left room only for a passing reference to yesterday's tragedy.

"I didn't like him at all," she said; "but still it's dreadful—a man one knew ever so slightly!"

Alicia agreed, and the next instant she found

herself practically alone with Medland ; for Daisy ran off to pick a wild-flower that caught her eye in the wood, and Norburn followed her. Not knowing whether to be glad or sorry, she made no effort to escape, and was silent while Medland began to speak of his prospects in that evening's division.

Suddenly she paused in her walk and lifted her eyes to his.

“ You look happier,” she said.

Medland’s conscience smote him : he was looking happier because the man was dead.

“ It’s at the prospect of being a free man to-morrow,” he answered, with a smile. “ You know Cincinnatus was very happy.”

“ But you’re not like that.”

“ No, I suppose not. Say it’s——”

“ Never mind.”

After a pause she made another attempt.

“Mr. Medland!”

“Yes?”

“You’ve been very good to me—yes, very good.”

He turned to her with a gesture of disclaimer. She thought he was going to speak, but he did not.

“Whatever happens, I shall always remember that with—with deep gratitude.”

“What is going to happen?” he asked, with an uneasy smile.

“Oh, how can I?” she burst out. “How can I say it? How can I ask you?”

As she spoke she stopped, and he followed her example. They stood facing one another now, as he replied gravely,

“Whatever you ask—let it be what it will—I will answer, truthfully.” A pause before the last word perhaps betrayed a momentary struggle.

“What right have I? Why should you?”

“The right my—my desire to have your regard gives you. How can I ask for that, unless I am ready to tell you all you can wish to know?”

“I have heard,” she began falteringly, “I have been told by—by people who, I suppose, were right to tell me—”

In a moment he understood her. A slight twitch of his mouth betrayed his trouble, but he came to her rescue.

“I don’t know how it reached you,” he said. “Perhaps I think you might have been—you need not have known it. But there is only one thing you can have heard, that it would distress you to speak of.”

She said nothing, but fixed her eyes on his.

“I am right?” he asked. “It is about—my wife?”

She bowed her head. He stood silent for a moment, and she cried,

"It was only gossip—a woman's gossip ; I did wrong to listen to it."

"Gossip," he said, "is often true. This is true," and he set his lips.

The worst often finds or makes people calm. She had flushed at first, but the colour went again, and she said quietly,

"If you have time and don't mind, I should like to hear it all."

She had forgotten what this request must mean to him, or perhaps she thought the time for pretence had gone by. If so, he understood, for he answered,

"It's your right."

Her eyes sank to the ground, but she did not quarrel with his words. She stood motionless while he told his story. He spoke with wilful brevity and dryness.

"I was a young man when I met her. She

was married, and I went to the house. Her husband——”

“Did he ill-treat her?”

“No. In his way, I suppose he was fond of her. But—she didn’t like his way. She was very beautiful, and I fell in love with her, and she with me. And we ran away.”

“Is—is that all? Is there no——?”

“No excuse? No; I suppose, none. And I lived with her till she died four years ago. And—Daisy is our daughter.”

“And he—the husband?”

“He did not divorce her. I don’t know why not, perhaps because she asked him to—anyhow he didn’t. And he outlived her: so she died—as she had lived.”

“And is he still alive?”

“No; he is dead now.” He was about to go on, but checked himself. Why add that horror?

How the man died was nothing between her and him.

"Have you no—nothing to say?" she burst out, almost angrily. "You just tell me that and stop!"

"What is there to say? I have told you all there is to tell. I loved her very much. I did what I could to make her happy, and I try to make up for it to Daisy. But there is nothing more to say."

She was angry that he would not defend himself. She was ready—ah, so ready!—to listen to his pleading. But he would not say a word for himself. Instead, he went on,

"She didn't want to come, but I made her. She repented, poor girl, all her life; she was never quite happy. It was all my doing. Still, I think she was happier with me, in spite of it."

A movement of impatience escaped from Alicia. Seeing it he added,

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“I beg your pardon. I didn’t want you to think hardly of her.”

“I don’t want to think of her at all. Was she—was she like Daisy?”

“Yes; but prettier.”

“I don’t know what you expect me to say,” she exclaimed. “I know—I suppose some men don’t think much of—of a thing like that. To me it is horrible. You simply followed your— Ah, I can’t speak of it!” and she seemed to put him from her with a gesture of disgust.

He walked beside her in silence, his face set in the bitter smile it always wore when fate dealt hardly with him.

“I think I’ll go straight home,” she said, stopping suddenly. “You can join the others.”

“Yes, that will be best. I’m not due at the Council just yet.”

“I suppose I ought to thank you for telling me the truth. I—” Her false composure suddenly gave way. With a sob she stretched out her hands towards him, crying, “Why didn’t you tell me sooner?” and before he could answer her she turned and walked swiftly away, leaving him standing still on the pathway.

She was hardly inside the gates of Government House when she saw Eleanor Scaife, who hurried to meet her.

“Only think, Alicia!” she cried. “Dick is on his way home, and with such good news. We’ve just had a cable from him.”

“Coming back!”

“Yes. He’s engaged! He met the Grangers on their tour round the world—you know them, the great cotton people?—at Sydney, and he’s engaged to the youngest girl, Violet—you remember her? It all happened in a fortnight. Mary and

Lord Eynesford are delighted. It's just perfect. She's very pretty, and tremendously well off. I do declare, I never thought Dick would end so well! What a happy thought it was sending him away! Aren't you delighted?"

"It sounds very nice, doesn't it? I don't think I knew her more than just to speak to."

"Dick 'll be here in four days. I've been looking for you to tell you for the last hour. Where have you been?"

"In the Park."

"Alone, as usual, you hermit?"

"Well, I met the Medlands and Mr. Norburn, and talked to them for a little while."

"Alicia! But it's no use talking to you. Come and find Mary."

"No, Eleanor, I'm tired, and—and hot. I'll go to my room."

"Oh, you must come and see her first."

“I can’t.”

“She’ll be hurt, Alicia. She’ll think you don’t care. Come, dear.”

“Tell her—tell her I’m coming directly. Eleanor, you must let me go,” and breaking away she fled into the house.

Eleanor went alone to seek Lady Eynesford. Somehow Alicia’s words had quenched her high spirits for the moment.

“Poor child! I do hope she hasn’t been foolish,” she mused. “Surely after what Mary told her—! Oh dear, I’m afraid it isn’t all as happy as it is about Dick!”

And then she indulged in some very cynical meditations on the advantages of being a person of shallow emotions and changeful fancies, until she was roused by the sight of Medland and Norburn walking up to the house, to attend the Executive Council. From the window she closely

watched the Premier as he approached ; her mood wavered to and fro, but at last she summed up her impressions by remarking,

“ Well, I suppose one might.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STORY OF A PHOTOGRAPH.

MR. COXON may be forgiven for being, on this same important Monday, in a state of some nervous excitement. He had a severe attack of what are vulgarly called "the fidgets," and Sir John, who was spending the morning at the Club (for his court was not sitting), glanced at him over his eye-glasses with an irritated look. The ex-Attorney-General would not sit still, but flitted continually from window to table, and back from table to window, taking up and putting down journal after journal. Much depended, in Mr. Coxon's

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view, on the event of that day, for Sir John spoke openly of his approaching retirement, and an appointment sometimes thought worthy of a Premier's acceptance might be in Coxon's grasp before many weeks were past, if only Medland and his noxious idea of getting a first-class man out from England could be swept together into limbo.

“What's the betting about to-night ?” asked the Chief Justice, as in one of his restless turns the brooding politician passed near.

“We reckon to beat him by five,” answered Coxon.

“Unless any of your men turn tail, that is? I hear Fenton's very wobbly—says he daren't show his face in the North-east Ward if he throws Medland over.”

“Oh, he's all right.”

“Been promised something?”

"You might allow some of us to have consciences, Chief Justice," said Coxon, with an attempt at geniality.

"Oh, some of you, yes. But I'll pick my men, please," remarked Sir John, with a pleasant smile. "Perry's got a conscience, and Kilshaw—well, Kilshaw's got a gadfly that does instead, and of course, Coxon, I add you to the list."

"Much obliged for your testimonial," said Coxon sourly.

"I add any man I'm talking to, to the list," continued the Chief Justice. "I expect him to do the same by me. But, honestly, I add you even in your absence. You're not a man who puts party ties above everything."

Mr. Coxon darted a suspicious glance at the head of his profession, but the Chief Justice's air was blandly innocent.

"My party's my party," he remarked, "just so

long as it carries out my principles. I don't say either party does it perfectly."

"I dare say not; but of course you're right to act with the one that does most for you."

Again the Chief Justice had hit on a somewhat ambiguous expression. Coxon detected a grin on the face of Captain Heseltine, who was sitting near, but he could not hold Sir John's grave face guilty of the Captain's grin.

"I see," remarked the Captain, perhaps in order to cover the retreat of his grin, "that they've discharged the woman who was arrested last night for the murder."

"Really no evidence against her," said the Chief Justice. "But, Heseltine, wasn't this man Benham the fellow Medland had a sort of shindy with at that flower-show?"

"Yes, he was. Kilshaw seemed to know all about him."

“ He was talking to Miss Medland.”

“ And the Premier had her away from him in no time. Queer start, Sir John ? ”

“ Oh, well, he seems to have been a loose fellow, and I suppose was murdered for the money he had on him. But I mustn’t talk about it. I may have to try it.”

“ Gad ! you’ll be committing contempt of yourself,” suggested the Captain.

“ Like that snake that swallows itself, eh ? ”

“ What snake ? ” asked the Captain, with interest.

“ The snake in the story,” answered the Chief Justice ; and he added in an undertone—“ Why can’t that fellow sit still ? ”

Mr. Coxon had wandered to the window again, and was thrumming on the panes. He turned on hearing some one enter. It was Sir Robert Perry.

“ Well,” he began, “ I bring news of the event of the day.”

“About to-night?” asked Coxon eagerly.

“To-night! That’s not the event of the day. Ministers are a deal commoner than murders. No, last night.”

Coxon turned away disappointed.

“The murder!” exclaimed the Captain.

“Don’t talk to me about it, Perry,” the Chief Justice requested, opening a paper in front of his face. He did not, however, withdraw out of ear-shot.

“They’ve got a sort of a clue. A wretched hobbledehoy of a fellow, something in the book-seller’s shop at the corner of Kettle Street, has come with a rigmarole about a society that he and a few more belonged to, including this François Gaspard, who is missing. He protests that the thing was legal, and all that—only a Radical inner ring—but he says that at the last meeting this fellow was dropping hints about putting somebody

out of the way. Dyer—that's the lad's name—swears the rest of them disowned him and said they'd have nothing to do with it, and hoped he'd given up the idea."

"I suppose he's in a blue funk?" asked the Captain.

"He is no doubt alarmed," said Sir Robert. "He gave the police the names of the rest of their precious society, and, oddly enough, Ned Evans of the House—you know him, Coxon?—was one."

"Heard such an awful lot of debates, poor chap," observed Captain Heseltine.

"Well, they went to Evans' and collared him. For a time he stuck out that he knew nothing about it, but they threatened him with heaven knows what, and at last he confessed to having seen this Gaspard in company with the murdered man in Digby Square a little before twelve on the night."

"By Jove! That's awkward!" said the Captain. Coxon showed more interest now, and remarked, "Why, Gaspard was one of Medland's organisers. I saw him with both Medland and Norburn on Saturday."

"I don't suppose they were planning to murder this Benham. Indeed, I don't see that the thing can have been political at all. What did it matter whether Benham lived or died?"

"I don't see that it did, except to Benham," assented the Captain. "But what's become of Gaspard?"

"Ah, that they don't know. He's supposed to have taken ship, and they've cabled to search all ships that left the port that morning."

"He'll find the man in blue — or the local equivalent — on the wharf," said the Captain. "Rather a jar that, Sir Robert, when you're in from a voyage. What are they doing now?"

"Well, the Superintendent said they were going to have a thorough search through the dead man's lodgings, to see if they could find out anything about him which would throw light on the motive. The police don't think much of the political theory of the crime."

"Dashed nonsense, *I* should think," said the Captain, and he sauntered off to play billiards.

"That young man," said the Chief Justice, "is really not a fool, though he does his best to look like one."

"That queer conduct seems to me rather common in young men at home. I noticed it when I was over."

"Is it meant to imply independent means?"

"I dare say that idea may be dormant under it somewhere. My wife says the girls like it."

"Then your wife, Perry, is a traitor to her sex

to make such confessions. Besides, they didn't in my time."

"Come, you know, you're a forlorn bachelor. What can you know about it?"

"Bachelors, Perry, are the men who know. Which gathers most knowledge from a vivisection, the attentive student or the writhing frog?"

"The operator, most of all."

"Doubtless."

"And that's the woman. Therefore, Oakapple, you're wrong and my wife's right."

"The deuce!" said the Chief Justice. "I wonder how I ever got any briefs."

In the afternoon, when these idlers had one and all set out for the Legislative Assembly, some to work, others still to idle, Mr. Kilshaw felt interest enough in the fate of his late henchman to drop in at the police office on his way to the same destination. He was well known, and no one objected

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to his walking in and making for the door of the Superintendent's room. An officer to whom he spoke told him that Ned Evans was in custody, and that it was rumoured that some startling discoveries had been made at Benham's lodgings.

"Indeed, sir," said the man, "I believe the Superintendent wished to see you."

"Ah, I dare say," said Kilshaw. "Tell him I'm here."

When he was ushered into the inner room, the Superintendent confirmed the officer's surmise.

"I was going to send a message to ask you to step round, sir," he remarked.

"Here I am, but don't be long. I don't want to miss the Premier's speech."

"Mr. Medland speaking to-day?"

"Of course. It's a great day with us at the House."

"I think it looks like being a great day all

round. Well, Mr. Kilshaw, you told me you knew the deceased."

"Yes, I knew Benham."

"Benyon," corrected the Superintendent.

"Yes, that was his real name," assented Kilshaw.

"At his lodgings there was found a packet. That's the wrapper," and he handed a piece of brown paper to Kilshaw.

"In case," Kilshaw read, "of my death or disappearance, please deliver this parcel to Mr. Kilshaw, Legislative Assembly, Kirton."

"I'm sorry to say, sir," said the Superintendent, "that the detective sergeant conducting the search took upon him to open this packet in the presence of one or two persons. It ought to have been opened by no one but——"

"Myself."

"Pardon me, but myself," said the Superintendent, with a slight smile. "Owing to the

inexcusable blunder, I'm afraid something about what it contains may leak out prematurely. Those pests, the reporters, are everywhere ; you can't keep 'em out."

"Well, what does it contain ?" asked Kilshaw. He was annoyed at this unsought publicity, but he saw at once that he must show no sign of vexation.

"That, for one thing," and the Superintendent handed Kilshaw a photograph of two persons, a young woman and a young man. "Look at the back," he added.

Kilshaw looked, and read—"My wife and M."

"That's the deceased's handwriting ?"

"Yes."

"And you know the persons ?"

"I've no doubt about them. It's the Premier—and—and Mrs. Medland."

"Exactly. Now read this," and he gave him

the copy of a certificate of marriage between George Benyon and Margaret Aspland.

"Quite so," nodded Kilshaw.

"And this."

Kilshaw took the slip of newspaper, old and yellow. It contained a few lines, briefly recording that Mrs. Benyon had left her home secretly by night, in her husband's absence, and could not be found.

Kilshaw nodded again.

"It doesn't surprise me," he said. "I knew all this. I was in Mr. Benyon's confidence."

"Perhaps you can tell us how he lived?" hazarded the Superintendent, with a shrewd look.

Mr. Kilshaw looked doubtful.

"The inquest is fixed for to-morrow. The more we know now, the less it will be necessary to protract it."

"I have been helping him lately," admitted

Kilshaw ; and he added, "Look here, Superintendent, I don't want that more talked about than necessary."

"You needn't say a word to me now unless you like, sir ; but I only want to make things as comfortable as I can. You see, the coroner is bound to look into it a bit. Had you given him money lately ? "

"Yes."

"Much ? "

Kilshaw leant forward and answered, almost in a whisper,

"Five hundred on Friday night," and in spite of himself he avoided the Superintendent's shrewd eye. But that officer's business was not to pass moral judgments. Law is one thing, morality another.

"Then the thing's as plain as a pikestaff. This Gaspard got to know about the money, and

murdered him to get it. We needn't look further for a motive."

"I suppose all this will have to come out? I wonder if Gaspard knew who Benham was?"

"It's not necessary to suppose that, unless we believe all Evans says. Certainly, if we trust Evans, Gaspard hinted designs on some one before he could have known Benyon had this money. Could he have known he was going to have it?"

"Benyon may have told him I had promised to help him."

"Well, sir, we must see about that. We shall want you at the inquest, sir."

"I suppose you will, confound you! And I should think you'd want a greater man than I am, too."

The Superintendent looked grave.

"I am going up to try and see the Premier at the House to-day," he said. "I think we shall

have to trouble him. You see, he knew Gaspard as well as the deceased."

"I'll give you a lift. You can keep out of the way till he's at leisure."

At this moment one of the police entered, and handed the Superintendent a copy of the *Evening Mail*.

"It's as you feared, sir," he remarked as he went out.

The Superintendent opened the paper, looked at it for an instant, and then indicated a passage with his forefinger.

"It is rumoured," read Mr. Kilshaw, "that certain very startling facts have come to light regarding the identity of the deceased man Benham, and that the name of a very prominent politician, now holding an exalted office, is likely to be introduced into the case. As the matter will be public property to-morrow, we may be allowed

to state that trustworthy reports point to the fact of the Premier being in a position to give some important information as to the past life of the deceased. It is said that a photograph of two persons, one of whom is Mr. Medland, has been discovered among the papers at Mr. Benham's (or we should say Benyon's) lodgings. Further developments of this strange affair will be awaited with interest."

"I wish," commented the Superintendent grimly, "that my men could keep a secret as well as their man can sniff one out."

But Mr. Kilshaw was too excited to listen.

"By Jove," he cried, "the news 'll be at the House by now! Come along, man, come along!"

And, as they went, they read the rest; for the paper had it all—even a copy of that marriage certificate.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN ORATOR'S RIVAL.

THE House was crowded, and every gallery full. Lady Eynesford and Eleanor Scaife, attended by Captain Heseltine, occupied their appointed seats ; the members of the Legislative Council overflowed from their proper pen and mingled with humbler folk in the public galleries ; reporters wrote furiously, and an endless line of boys bearing their slips came and went. The great hour had arrived : the battle-field was reached at last. Sir Robert Perry sat and smiled ; Puttock played with the hair chain that wandered across his broad waistcoat ;

Coxon restlessly bit his nails; Norburn's face was pale with excitement, and he twisted his hands in his lap; the determined partisans cheered or groaned; the waverers looked important and felt unhappy; all eyes were steadily fixed on the Premier, and all ears intent on his words.

For the moment he had forgotten everything but the fight he was fighting. No thought of the wretched Benham, who lay dead, no thought of his daughter, who watched him as he spoke, no thought of Alicia Derosne, who stayed away that she might not see him, crossed his brain now, or turned his ideas from the task before him. It was no ordinary speech, and no ordinary occasion. He spoke only to five men out of all his audience—the rest were his, or were beyond the power of his charm; on those five important-looking, unhappy-feeling men he bent every effort of his will, and played every device of his mind and his tongue.

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Now and then he distantly threatened them, oftener he made as though to convince their cool judgment; again he would invoke the sentiment of old alliance in them, or stir their pity for the men whose cause he pleaded. Once he flashed out in bitter mockery at Coxon, then jested in mild irony at Puttock and his "rich man's revolution." Returning to his text, he minutely dissected his own measure, insisting on its promise, extenuating its fancied danger, claiming for it the merits of a courageous and well-conceived scheme. Through all the changes that he rang, he was heard with close attention, broken only by demonstrations of approval or of dissent. At last one of his periods extorted a cheer from a waverer. It acted on him as a spur to fresh exertions. He raised his voice till it filled the chamber, and began his last and most elaborate appeal.

Suddenly a change came over his hearers. The

breathless silence of engrossed attention gave place to a subdued stir ; whispers were heard here and there. Men were handing a newspaper about, accompanying its transfer with meaning looks. He was not surprised, for members made no scruple of reading their papers or writing their letters in the House, but he was vexed to see that he had not gripped them closer. He went on, but that ever-circulating paper had half his attention now. He noticed Kilshaw come in with it and press it on Sir Robert's notice. Sir Robert at first refused, but when Kilshaw urged, he read and glanced up at him, so Medland thought, with a look of sadness. Coxon had got a paper now, and left biting his nails to pore over it ; he passed it to Puttock, and the fat man bulged his cheeks in seeming wonder. Even his waverer, the one who had cheered, was deep in it. Only Norburn was unconscious of it. And, when they had read, they all looked at him

again, not as they had looked before, but, it seemed to him, with a curious wonder, half mocking, half pitying, as one looks at a man who does not know the thing that touches him most nearly. He glanced up at the galleries: there too was the ubiquitous sheet; the Chief Justice and the President of the Legislative Council were cheek by jowl over it, and it fell lightly from Lady Eynesford's slim fingers, to be caught at eagerly by Eleanor Scaife.

“What is it?” he whispered impatiently to Norburn; but his absorbed disciple only bewilderedly murmured “What?” and the Premier could not pause to tell him.

Now followed what Sir Robert maintained was the greatest feat of oratory he had ever witnessed. Gathering his wandering wits together, Medland plunged again whole-heartedly into his speech, and slowly, gradually, almost, it seemed, step by step

and man by man, he won back the thoughts of his audience. He wrestled with that strange paper rival and overthrew it. Man after man dropped it ; its course was stayed ; it fell underfoot or fluttered idly down the gangways. The nods ceased, the whispers were hushed, the stir fell and rose no more. Once again he had them, and, inspired by that knowledge, the surest spur of eloquence, there rang from his lips the last burning words, the picture of the vision that ruled his life, the hope for the days that he might not see.

“Believe !” he cried, in passionate entreaty, “believe, and your sons shall surely see !”

He sank in his seat, and the last echo of his resonant voice died away. First came silence, and then a thunder of applause. Men stood up and waved what they had in their hands, hats or handkerchiefs or papers ; women sat with their eyes still on him, or, with a gasp, leant back and closed their

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lids. He sat with his head sunk on his breast, till the tumult died away. No one rose. The Speaker looked round once and again. Could it be that no one——? Slowly he began to rise. The movement caught Sir Robert's attention: he signed to Puttock, who sprang heavily to his feet. Puttock was no favourite as a speaker, and generally his rising was a signal for the House to thin. He began his speech with his stolid deliberation. Not a man stirred. They waited for something still.

“And now,” whispered Medland to the Treasurer, who sat by him, “let's see what it was in that infernal paper.”

The Treasurer handed him what he asked.

“You ought to see it,” he whispered back.

Mr. Puttock's voice droned on, and his sheaf of notes rustled in his hand. No one looked at him or listened to him. Their eyes were still on Medland. The Premier read—it seemed so slowly

—put the paper down, and gazed first up at the ceiling ; then he glanced round, and found all the attentive eyes on him : he smiled—it was just a visible smile, no more—and his head fell again on his breast, while his hand idly twisted a button on his coat.

The show was over, or had never come, and the deferred rush to the doors began. They almost tumbled over one another now in their haste to reach where their tongues could play freely. Kilshaw and Perry, the Treasurer and the waverers, all slipped out, and Norburn, knowing nothing but simply wearied of Puttock, followed them. Scarce twenty were left in the House, and the galleries had poured half their contents into the great room which served for a lobby outside. There the talk ran swift and eager. The very name of “ Benyon ” was enough for many, who remembered that it had always been said to be the



maiden name of Medland's wife. Could any one doubt who the other person in that strangely revealed photograph was, or fail to guess the relation between the man they had been listening to and the man who was dead ? A few had known Benyon, more Gaspard, all Medland—the three figures of this drama ; many remembered the fourth, the central character, who had not tarried for the end of it : the man was rare who did not spend a thought on the bright girl, whose face was so familiar in these walls, and who must be dragged into it. Where was she ? asked one. She was gone. Norburn, with rapid instinct, as soon as he had read, had run to her and forced her to go home. He was back from escorting her now, and walked up and down with hands behind him, speaking to no one among all the busily babbling throng.

The waverers stood in a little group by themselves, talking earnestly in undertones, while men

wondered whether the paper would undo what the speech had done, and whether the Premier's words had won a victory, only for his deeds to leap to light and rob it from him again.

Inside, the debate lagged on, surely the dullest, emptiest, most neglected debate that had ever decided the fate of a Government. The men who had been set down to speak came in and spoke and went out again ; a House was kept, but with little to spare. Sir Robert went in and took his place, opposite Medland, who never stirred through all the hours. Presently Sir Robert wrote a note, twisted it, and flung it to the Premier. "A splendid performance of yours, *mes compliments*," it said, and, when Medland looked across to acknowledge it, Sir Robert smiled kindly, and nodded his silver head, and the Premier answered him with a glad gleam in his deep-set eyes. These two men, who were always fighting, knew one another, and liked

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one another for what they knew. And this little episode done, Sir Robert rose and pricked and pinked the Premier's points, making sharp fun of his heroics, and weightily criticising his proposals. Now the House did fill a little, for after all the debate was important, and the hour of the division drew near ; and when the question was put and the bell rang, nearly half the House trooped out with virtuous air to join the other half, persistently gossiping in the lobby, and, with them, decide the fateful question.

One more strange thing was to happen at that sitting.

It was not strange that the Government were beaten by three votes, that only one of those wavering men voted with his old party at last, but it was strange that when this result was announced, and Medland's followers settled sturdily in their seats to endure the celebration of the triumph, the

celebration did not come. There was hardly a cheer, and Medland himself, whom the result seemed hardly to have roused, woke with a start to the unwonted silence. It struck to his heart: it seemed like a tribute of respect to a dead enemy. But he rose and briefly said that on the next day an announcement of the Government's intentions would be made by himself—he paused here a moment—or one of his colleagues. He sat down again. The sitting was at an end, and the House adjourned. Members began to go out, but, as the Premier rose, they drew back and left a path for him down the middle of the House. As he went, one or two thrust out their hands to him, and one honest fellow shouted in his rough voice—he was a labouring-man member—"You're not done yet, Jimmy!"

The shout touched him, he lifted his head, looked round with a smile, and, just raising again

the hat he had put on as he neared the door, took Norburn's arm and passed out of the House.

When Sir Robert followed, he found the Chief Justice waiting for him, and they walked off together. For a long while neither spoke, but at last Sir Robert said peevishly,

“I wish this confounded thing hadn't happened. It spoils our win.”

The Chief Justice nodded, and whistled a bar or two of some sad ditty.

“I'm glad she's dead, poor soul, Perry,” he said.

“There's the girl,” said Sir Robert.

“Ay, there's the girl.”

They did not speak again till they were just parting, when the Chief Justice broke out,

“Why the deuce couldn't the fellow take his beastly photograph with him?”

"It's very absurd," answered Sir Robert, "but I feel just the same about it."

"I'm hanged if you're not a gentleman, Perry," said the Chief Justice, and he hastened away, blowing his nose.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THREE AGAINST THE WORLD.

THOUGH the House had risen early that evening, the Central Club sat very late. The smoking-room was crowded, and tongues wagged briskly. Every man had a hare to hunt; no one lacked irrefragable arguments to prove what must happen; no one knew exactly what was going to happen. The elder men gathered round Puttock and Jewell, and listened to a demonstration that the Premier's public life was at an end; the younger rallied Coxon, whose premature stateliness sometimes invited this treatment, dubbing him "Kingmaker

Coxon," and hilariously repudiating the idea that he did not enjoy the title. Captain Heseltine dropped in about eleven ; cross-questioning drew from him the news that communications had passed, informal communications, he insisted, from the Governor to Sir Robert, as well as to the Premier.

"In fact," he said, "poor old Flemyngh's cutting up and down all over the place. Glad it's his night on duty."

Presently Mr. Flemyngh himself appeared, clamorous for cigars and drink, but mighty discreet and vexatiously reticent. Yes, he had taken a letter to Medland ; yes, and another to Perry ; no, he had no idea what the missives were about. He believed Medland was to see the Governor tomorrow, but it was beyond him to conjecture the precise object of the interview. Was it resignation or dissolution ? Really, he knew no more

than that waiter—and so forth; very likely his ignorance was real, but he diffused an atmosphere of suppressed knowledge which whetted the curiosity of his audience to the sharpest edge.

A messenger entered and delivered a note to Puttock and another to Coxon. The two compared their notes for a moment, and went out together. The arguments rose furiously again, some maintaining that Medland must disappear altogether, others vehemently denying it, a third party preferring to await the disclosures at the inquest before committing themselves to an opinion. An hour passed; the noise in the streets began to abate, and the clock of the Roman Catholic cathedral hard by struck twelve. Captain Heseltine yawned, stretched, and rose to his feet.

“Come along, Flemyngh,” he said. “The show’s over for to-night.”

He seemed to express the general feeling, but

men were reluctant to acknowledge so disappointing a conclusion, and the preparations for departure were slow and lingering. They had not fairly begun before Mr. Kilshaw's entrance abruptly checked them. Instantly he became the centre of a crowd.

"Now, Kilshaw," they cried, "you know all about it. Oh, come now! Of course you do! Secret? Nonsense! Out with it!" and one or two of his intimates added imploringly, "Don't be an ass, Kilshaw."

Kilshaw flung himself into a chair.

"They resign," he said.

"At once?"

"Yes. Perry's to be sent for. Medland, I'm told, insists on going. For my own part, I think he's right."

"Of course," said somebody sapiently, "he doesn't want to dissolve with this affair hanging over him."

"It comes to the same thing," observed Kilshaw. "Perry will dissolve; the Governor has promised to do it, if he likes."

"Perry dissolve!"

"Yes," nodded Kilshaw. "You see—" He paused and added, "Our present position isn't very independent."

Everybody understood what he hinted. Sir Robert did not care to depend on the will of Coxon and his seceders.

"And what about Coxon and Puttock?" was the next question.

"Haven't I been indiscreet enough?"

"Well, what are you going to do yourself?"

"My duty," answered Mr. Kilshaw, with a smile, and the throng, failing to extract any more from him, did at last set about the task of getting home to bed in good earnest.

They could rest sooner than the man who

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occupied so much of their interest. It had been a busy evening for the defeated Minister; he had colleagues to see, letters to write, messages to send, conferences to hold. No doubt there was much to do, and yet Norburn, who watched him closely, doubted whether he did not make work for himself, perhaps as a means of distraction, perhaps as a device for postponing an interview with his daughter. He had seen her for a minute when he came in, and told her he would tell her all there was to tell some time that night; but the moment for it was slow in coming. Norburn had been struck with Daisy's composure. She had seen the *Evening Mail*, and, without attempting to discuss the matter with him, she expressed her conviction that there could be nothing distressing behind the mysterious paragraph. Norburn did not know what to say to her. He felt that in a case of this sort a girl's mind was a closed book

to him. He had himself, on the way back from the House, heard a brief account of the whole matter from the Premier's lips ; it seemed to him, in the light of his ideas and theories, a matter of very little moment. He was of course aware how widely the judgment of many would differ from his, and when his mind was directed to the political aspect of the situation, he acknowledged the gravity of the disclosure. But honestly he could not pretend to think it a thing which should alter or lessen the esteem or love in which Medland's friends held him. And even if the original act were seriously worthy of blame, the lapse of years made present severity as unreasonable as it would be unkind. In vain Medland reminded him that, let the act be as old and long past as it would, the consequences remained.

“What!” Norburn cried, “would any one think the worse of Daisy? The more fools they!” and

he laughed cheerfully, adding, "I only wish she'd let me show her I think none the worse of her. Why, it's preposterous, sir!"

"Preposterous or not," answered Medland, "half the people in the place will let her know the difference. I may agree with you—God knows how I should like to be able to!—but there's no blinking the fact. Well, I must tell her."

He recollected telling the same story to the other woman he loved, and he shrank in sudden dread, lest his daughter should say what Alicia had said, "To me it is—horrible!" The words echoed in his brain. "Ah, I can't speak of it," she had cried, and the gesture of her hand as she repelled him lived before his eyes again. Surely Daisy would not do that to him!

"I should be like Lear—without a grievance," he said to himself, with a wry smile. "The very height of tragedy!"

It was near midnight before he put away his work. Norburn had left him alone two hours before, and he rose now, laid down his pipe, and went to look for his daughter in her little sitting-room. His heart was very heavy ; he must make her understand now why a man who made love to her should be hastily sent away by his friends, what her father had condemned her to, what manner of man he was ; he must seem to destroy or impair the perfect sweetness of memory wherein she held her mother.

He opened the door softly. She was sitting in a large armchair, over a little bit of bright fire ; save for gleams suddenly coming and going, as a coal blazed and died down again, the room was in darkness. He walked up to her and knelt by the chair, his head almost on a level with hers.

“ Well, Daisy, what are you doing ? ”

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She put out a hand and laid it on his with a gentle pressure.

"I'm thinking," she said. "Do you want a light?"

"No, I like it dark best—best for what I have to say."

Suddenly she threw her arms round his neck, drawing him to her and kissing his face.

"I'd do the same if you'd killed him yourself," she whispered in the extravagance of her love, and kissed him again.

"But, Daisy, you don't know."

"Yes, I do. He told me. He's been here."

"Who?"

"Jack Norburn. He said you would hate telling me, so he did. You mustn't mind, dear, you mustn't mind. Oh, you didn't think it would make any difference to me, dear, did you? What do I care? Mrs. Puttock may care, and Lady

Eynesford, and all the rest, but what do I care if I have you and him?"

"Me and him, Daisy?"

"Yes," she answered, smiling boldly. "He's asked me to marry him—just to show he didn't mind—and I think I will, father. We three against the world! What need we care? Father, we'll beat Sir Robert!" and she seized his two hands and laughed.

In vain Medland tried to tell her what he had come to say. Mighty as his relief and joy were, he still felt a burden lay on him. She would not hear.

"Don't you see I'm happy?" she cried. "It can't be your duty to make me unhappy. Jack doesn't mind, I don't mind!" Her voice sank a little and she added, "It can't hurt mother now. Oh, don't be unhappy about it, dear—don't, don't!"

They were standing now, and his arm was about her. Looking up at him, she went on,

“They shan’t beat us! They shan’t say they beat us. We three, father!”

He stooped and kissed her. There is love that lies beyond the realm of giving or taking, of harm or good, of wrong, or even of forgiveness. With all his faults, this love he had won from his daughter, and it stood him in stead that night. He drew himself up to his height, and the air of despondency fell from him. The girl’s brave love braced him to meet the world again.

“No, by Jove, we’re not beat yet, Daisy!” he said, and she kissed him again and laughed softly as she made him sit, and herself sat upon his knee.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE TRUTH TOO LATE.

By four o'clock the next afternoon the Club had gathered ample materials for fresh gossip. The formalities attendant on the change of government, the composition of the new Cabinet, the prospects of the election—these alone would have supplied many hours, and besides them, indeed supplanting them temporarily by virtue of an intenser interest, there was the account of the inquest on Benyon's body. Medland had gone to it, almost direct from his final interview with the Governor, and Kilshaw had been there, fresh from a conference

with Perry. The inquiry had ended, as was foreseen directly Ned Evans' evidence was forthcoming, in a verdict of murder against Gaspard ; but the interest lay in the course of the investigation, not in its issue. Mr. Duncombe, a famous comedian, who was then on tour in New Lindsey and had been made an honorary member of the Club, smacked his lips over the dramatic moment when the ex-Premier, calmly and in a clear voice, had identified the person in the photograph, declared the deceased man to have been Benyon, and very briefly stated how he had been connected with him in old days.

“The lady,” he said, “is Mrs. Benyon. The other figure is that of myself. I had not seen the deceased for many years.”

“You were not on terms with him ?” asked the coroner, who, in common with half the listeners, had known the lady as Mrs. Medland.

“No,” said Mr. Medland; “I lost sight of him.”

“You did not hear from—from any one about him?”

“No.”

He gave the dates when he had last seen Benyon in old days. Asked whether he had communicated with him between that date and the dead man’s reappearance, he answered,

“Once, about four years ago. I wrote to tell him of that lady’s death,” and he pointed again to the picture, and went on to tell the details of Benyon’s subsequent application to him for a post under Government.

“You refused it?” he was asked.

“Yes, I refused it. I spoke to him once again, when we met on a social occasion. We had a sort of dispute then. I never saw him again to speak to.”

“It was all done,” said Mr. Duncombe, describing

the scene, "in a repressed way that was very effective—to a house that knew the circumstances most effective. And the other fellow—Kilshaw—he gave some sport too. The coroner (they told me he was one of Medland's men, and I noticed he spared Medland all he could) was inclined to be a bit down on Kilshaw. Kilshaw was cool and handy in his answers, but, Lord love you! his game came out pretty plain. A monkey! You don't give a man a monkey unless there's value received! So people saw, and Mr. Kilshaw looked a bit uncomfortable when he caught Medland's eye. He looked at him like that," and Mr. Duncombe assumed the finest wronged-hero glance in his repertory.

"Oh, come, old chap, I bet he didn't," observed Captain Heseltine. "We've seen him, you know."

Duncombe laughed good-humouredly.

"At any rate he made Kilshaw look a little

green, and some of the people behind called out 'Shame!' and got themselves sat upon. Then they had Medland up again and twisted him a bit about his acquaintance with Gaspard; but the coroner didn't seem to think there was anything in it, and they found murder against Gaspard, and rang down the curtain. And when we got outside there was a bit of a rumpus. They hooted Kilshaw and cheered Medland, and yelled like mad when a dashed pretty girl drove up in a pony-cart and carried him off. Altogether it wasn't half bad."

"Glad you enjoyed yourself," observed Captain Heseltine. "If it amuses strangers to see our leading celebrities mixed up in a murder and other distressing affairs, it's the least we can do to see that they get it."

The Captain's facetiousness fell on unappreciative ears. Most of Mr. Duncombe's audience were too alive to the serious side of the matter to enjoy it.

To them it was another and a very striking scene in the fight which had long gone on between Medland and Kilshaw, and had taken a fresh and fiercer impetus from the well-remembered day when Medland had spoken his words about Kilshaw and his race-horses. Nobody doubted that Kilshaw had kept this man Benyon, or Benham, as a secret weapon, and that the murder had only made the disclosure come earlier. Kilshaw's reputation suffered somewhat in the minds of the scrupulous, but his partisans would hear of no condemnation. They said, as he had said, that in dealing with a man like Medland it would have been folly not to use the weapons fate, or the foe himself by his own misdeeds, offered. As for the disapprobation of the Kirton mob, they held that in high scorn.

“They'd cheer burglary, if Medland did it,” said one.

"Well, he wants to, pretty nearly," added a capitalist.

"But the country will take a very different view. Puttock 'll rub it into all his people: *they* 'll not vote for him. What do you say, Coxon ? "

"I think we shall beat him badly," said that gentleman, as he rose and went out.

Captain Heseltine soon followed, and was surprised to see Coxon's figure just ahead of him as he entered the gates of Government House.

"Hang the fellow ! What does he want here ? " asked the Captain.

Mr. Coxon asked for Lady Eynesford. When he entered, she rose with a newspaper in her hand.

"What a shocking, shameful thing this is ! " she said. "What a blessing it is that the Government was beaten ! "

Coxon acquiesced in both these opinions.

"I never thought well of him," continued the

lady. "Now everybody sees him in his true colours. And it's you we have chiefly to thank for our deliverance."

Coxon murmured a modest depreciation of his services, and said,

"I hope Miss Derosne is well?"

Something in his tones brought to his hostess one of those swift fits of repentance that were apt to wait for her whenever she allowed herself to treat this visitor with friendliness. He was so very prompt in responding!

"She is not very well," she answered, rather coldly.

"I—I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing her?"

Mr. Coxon's wishes were fulfilled to the moment. The door opened and Alicia came in. On seeing him she stopped.

"Come in, Alicia," said Lady Eynesford. "Here's Mr. Coxon come to be congratulated."

Coxon stood up with a propitiatory smile.

"How do you do, Mr. Coxon?" said Alicia, giving him a limp hand. "Shall I ring for tea, Mary?"

"They'll bring it, You haven't wished him joy."

"Oh, are you in the new Ministry?"

"I have that honour, Miss Derosne. I hope you are on our side?"

"I don't quite know which side you are on—now," observed Alicia, in slow but distinct tones.

Coxon grew red.

"I—I have joined Sir Robert Perry's Ministry," he answered.

"Of course he has, Alicia," interposed Lady Eynesford hastily.

Alicia seated herself on the sofa, remarking as she did so,

"Well, you do change a good deal, don't you?"

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"Really, Miss Derosne," he stammered, "I don't understand you."

"Oh, I only mean that you were first with Sir Robert, then with Mr. Medland, and now with Sir Robert again! And presently with Mr. Medland again, I suppose?"

"She doesn't appreciate the political reasons," began Lady Eynesford, with troubled brow and smiling lips; but Coxon, frowning angrily, broke in,

"Not the last, I promise you, anyhow, Miss Derosne."

"What, you think he's finally beaten then?"

"That's not the question. Beaten or not, he is discredited, and no respectable man would act with him."

"We needn't discuss—" began Lady Eynesford again, but this time Alicia was the interrupter. She spoke in a cold, hard way, very unlike her own.

"If he won, you would all be at his feet."

Coxon was justified in being angry at her almost savage scorn of him; regardless of anything except his wrong, he struck back the sharpest blow he could.

"I know some people are very ready to be at his feet," he said, with a sneering smile.

His shaft hit the mark. Alicia flushed and sat speechless. A glance at Lady Eynesford's face told him the scene had lasted too long: he rose and took his leave, paying Alicia the homage of a bow, but not seeking her hand. She took no notice of his salute, and Lady Eynesford only gasped "Good-bye."

The two sat silent for some moments after he had gone; then Lady Eynesford remarked,

"Were you mad, Alicia? See what you laid yourself open to! Oh, of course a gentleman wouldn't have said it, but you yourself didn't treat

him as if he was a gentleman. Really, I can make a great deal of allowance for him. Your manner was inexcusable."

Alicia did not attempt to defend herself.

"You are out of temper," continued her sister-in-law, "and you choose to hit the first person within reach; if you can do that you care nothing for my dignity or your own self-respect. You parade your—your interest in this man—"

"I shall never speak to him again."

"I'm glad to hear it, and, if you come into my drawing-room, I will thank you to behave yourself properly and be civil to my guests," and Lady Eynesford walked out of the room.

Alicia huddled herself in a heap on the sofa, turning her face to the wall. She felt Lady Eynesford's scornful rebuke like the stroke of a whip. She had descended to a vulgar wrangle, and had been

worsted in it: the one thing of all which it concerned her to hide had by her own act been opened to the jeer of a stranger; she had violated every rule of good breeding and self-respect. No words—not even Lady Eynesford's—were too strong to describe what she had done. Yet she could not help it; she could not hear a creature like that abuse or condemn a man like Medland—though all that he had said she had said, and more, to Medland himself. She was too miserable to think; she lay with closed eyes and parted lips, breathing quickly, and restlessly moving her limbs in that strange physical discomfort which great unhappiness brings with it.

A footstep roused her; she sat up, hurriedly smoothing her hair and clutching at a book that lay on the table by her. The intruder was her brother, and fortunately he was too intent on the tidings he brought to notice her confusion.

“Great news, Al!” he cried. “They’ve offered me Ireland. We shall start home in a month.”

“Home in a month?” she echoed.

“Yes. Splendid, isn’t it?”

“You’re pleased, Willie?”

The Governor was very pleased. He liked the promotion, he liked going home; and finally, pleasant as his stay in New Lindsey had been on the whole, there were features in the present position which made him not sorry to depart.

“I shall just see the elections through, and Perry well started—at least, I suppose it’ll be Perry—and then we’ll be off. Shan’t you be glad to see the old home again, Al?”

“It’s so sudden,” she said. “I shall be sorry to leave here.”

“Oh, so shall I—very sorry to leave some of the people too. Still, it’s a good thing. Where’s

Eleanor? I must tell her. I say, Dick gets here to-morrow."

"Oh, I'm so glad."

The Governor hurried out again, and Alicia returned to the sofa. The knot of her troubles had been rudely cut. Perhaps this summary ending was best. She herself would not, she knew, have had the strength to tear herself away from that place, but if fate tore her—perhaps well and good. Nothing but unhappiness waited there for her; it seemed to her that nothing but unhappiness waited anywhere now; but at least, over at home, she would not have to fear the discovery of her secret, the secret she herself kept so badly, nor to endure the torture of gossip, hints, and clumsy pity. No one, over at home, would think of Medland; they might just know his name, might perhaps have heard him rumoured for a dangerous man and a vexatious opponent of good Sir Robert.

Certainly they would never think of him as the cause of bruising of heart to a young lady in fashionable society. So he would pass out of her life ; she would leave him to his busy, strenuous, happy-unhappy life, so full of triumphs and defeats, of ups and downs, of the love of many and the hate of many. Perhaps she, like the rest, would read his name in the *Times* now and then, unless indeed he were utterly vanquished. No, he was not finally beaten. Of that she was sure. His name would be read often in cold print, but the glow of the life he lived would be henceforth unknown to her. She would go back to the old world and the old circle of it. What would happen after that she was too listless to think. It was summed up in negations ; and these again melted into one great want, the absence of the man to whom her imagination and her heart blindly and obstinately clung.

Lady Eynesford had left her newspaper, and Alicia found her hand upon it. Taking it up, she read Medland's evidence at the inquest. A sudden revulsion of feeling seized her. Was this the man she was dreaming about, a man who calmly, coolly as though caring nothing, told that story in the face of all the world? Was she never to get rid of the spell he had cast on her before she knew what he really was? For a man like this she had sacrificed her self-respect, bandied insults with a vulgar upstart, and brought on her head a reproach more fitting for an ill-mannered child. She threw the paper from her and rose to her feet. She would think no more of him; he might be what he would; he was no fit subject for her thoughts, and he and the place where he lived and all this wretched country deserved nothing better than to be forgotten, resolutely, utterly, soon.

“I am very sorry, Mary,” she was saying, ten

minutes later ; " I deserved all you said. I don't know what foolishness possessed me. See, I have written and apologised to Mr. Coxon."

And Lady Eynesford kissed her and thanked heaven that they would soon have done with Mr. Coxon and—all the rest.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE UNCLEAN THING.

A FEW days later, Mr. Dick Derosne was walking in the Park at noon. He had been down to the Club and found no one there. Everybody except himself was at work: the politicians were scattered all over the colony, conducting their election campaign. Medland himself had gone to his constituency: his seat was very unsafe there, and he was determined to keep it if he could, although, as a precaution, he was also a candidate for the North-east ward of Kirton, where his success was beyond doubt. His friends and his

foes had followed him out of town, and the few who were left were busy in the capital itself. Such men as these when at the Club would talk of nothing but the crisis, and, after he had heard all there was to hear about the Benyon affair, the crisis began to bore Dick. After all, it mattered very little to him ; he would be out of it all in a month, and the Medlands were not, when he came to think of it, people of great importance. Why, the Grangers had never heard of them ! Decidedly, he had had enough and to spare of the Medlands.

Nevertheless, he was to have a little more of them, for at this instant he saw Daisy Medland approaching him. Escape was impossible, and Dick had the grace to shrink from appearing to avoid her.

“ The deuce ! ” he thought, “ this is awkward. I hope she won’t— ” He raised his hat with elaborate politeness.

Daisy stopped and greeted him with much effusion and without any embarrassment. Dick thought that odd.

"I was afraid," she said, "we were not going to see you again before you disappeared finally with the Governor."

"Oh, I came back just to settle things up. I hope you are all right, Miss Medland?"

"Yes, thank you. Did you have a pleasant trip?"

"Yes, very," he answered, wondering if she knew of his engagement.

"We missed you very much," she went on.

"Awfully kind of you to say so."

"You started so suddenly."

"Oh, well—yes, I suppose I did. It just struck me I ought to see Australia."

"How funny!" she exclaimed, with a little laugh.

"Why funny?" asked Dick, rather stiffly.

"I mean that it should strike you just like that. However, it was very lucky, wasn't it?"

"You mean I——"

"Yes, I mean you—" said Daisy, who had no intention of saving Dick from any floundering that might befall him. Mercy is all very well, but give us justice sometimes.

"You heard of my—my engagement?"

"I saw it in the papers. A Miss Granger, isn't it?"

"A Miss Granger!" thought Dick. Everybody knew the Grangers.

"I'm sure I congratulate you. You lost no time, Mr. Derosne."

Dick stammered that it was an old acquaintance renewed.

"Oh, then you've been in love with her a long while?" asked Daisy, with a curiosity apparently very innocent.

"Not exactly that."

"Then you did fall in love very quickly?"

"Well, I suppose I did," admitted Dick, as if he were rather ashamed of himself.

"Oh, I mustn't blame you," said Daisy, with a pensive sigh.

Dick, on the look-out for a hint of suppressed suffering, saw what he looked for. She was taking it very well, and it was his duty to say something nice. Moreover, Daisy Medland was looking extremely pretty, and that fact alone, in Dick's view, justified and indeed necessitated the saying of something nice. Violet Granger was leagues away, and a touch of romance could not disquiet or hurt her.

"Indeed I am anxious to hear that you don't," he said, accompanying his remark with a glance of pathetic anxiety.

"Why should I?" she asked.

This simple question placed Dick in a difficulty, and he was glad when she went on without waiting for an answer.

“Indeed I should have no right to. Love is sudden and — and beyond our control, isn’t it?”

“And yet,” said Dick, “a man is bound to consider so many things.”

“I was thinking of a girl’s love. She just gives it and thinks of nothing. Doesn’t she?” and she looked at him with an appeal to his experience in her eyes.

“Does she?” said Dick, who began to feel uncomfortable.

“And when she has once given it, she never changes.”

If this last remark were a generalisation, it was certainly an audacious one, but Dick was thinking only of a personal application. Daisy’s words, as

he understood their meaning, were working on the better nature which lay below his frivolity. He began to suffer genuine shame and remorse at the idea that he had caused suffering—lasting pain—to this poor unsophisticated child who had loved him so readily. Moved by this honourable, if tardy, compunction, he ejaculated,

“Oh, don’t say that, Miss Medland. I never thought—I—I mean, surely you don’t mean—?” And then he came to a dead stop for a moment ; only to start abruptly again the next, with—“It would spoil my happiness, if I thought—you don’t really mean it, do you ? I don’t know how I should ask you to forgive me, if you do.”

Daisy’s plot (which it is not sought to justify) had been crowned with success. A mischievous smile replaced her innocent expression.

“What do you mean, Mr. Derosne ? Forgive you ? I was speaking of my own feelings.”

“Yes, so—so I understood, and I wanted to say that I hoped you wouldn’t think I had been inconsid——”

“What does it matter to me, how long or how short your wooing is? They say lovers are self-centred, but really I think you’re the worst I ever met. I must confess I wasn’t thinking of you, Mr. Derosne.”

“What?” exclaimed Dick.

“Is it possible you haven’t heard of my engagement?” she asked in the sweetest tone.

“Your——”

“Yes—to Mr. Norburn,” and she watched the effect with obvious pleasure.

Dick pulled himself together. She had made a fool of him ; that was pretty clear now it was too late to help it.

“I hadn’t heard. I congratulate you,” he said, stiffly and awkwardly.

“Thanks. Of course that was what I meant when I said my feelings could never change. How odd you must have thought it of me, if you didn’t know!”

“Well, I—I didn’t quite understand.”

“You seemed puzzled and I couldn’t understand why. We were both thinking of ourselves too much, I suppose!”

“May I ask if you have been engaged long?”

“Oh, not actually engaged very long, but, like yours, it’s been an old acquaintance, and—if you won’t betray me—perhaps a little more for ever so long.”

Dick was not quite sure whether he believed the lady or not. He ought to have wished to believe her; as a fact, he was extremely reluctant to do so, but Daisy’s look was so candid and at the same time so naturally shy, in making her little avowal, that he was almost convinced that the semi-tragedy

of their parting scene a few weeks before had been all acting on her side. Alicia could have undeceived him, but, for reasons tolerably obvious, Dick did not rehearse this interview to Alicia or to any one else.

“Ah! here comes Mr. Norburn!” cried Daisy, rosy with delight. “You must congratulate one another.”

This very hollow ceremony was duly performed, and Dick left the lovers together. In fact he may be said to have made his exit in a somewhat shamefaced manner. Fortune put him at a disadvantage in that his partner was far away, while Daisy stood triumphant by the side of hers and watched him.

“Upon my honour,” he exclaimed, hitting viciously at a flower, “I believe she was humbugging me all the time!” And from that day to this he thinks Miss Medland a flirt, and is very glad, for

that among other weighty reasons, that he had nothing more to do with her.

Her behaviour towards Dick Derosne was fairly typical of Daisy Medland's attitude towards the world at large at this time. She made the mistake, natural enough, of being defiant, of emphasising outwardly an indifference that she did not feel, of anticipating slights and being ready to resent slurs which were never intended or inflicted. There are so many people in the world who want only an excuse for being kind, but yet do want that, and who are ready to give much, but must be asked. There were many among the upper circles of Kirton society who would have been ready enough to act a friendly part, to overlook much, to play protector to the girl, and do a favour to a man who had been and might again be powerful ; but they too needed to be asked—not of course in words, but by a hint of gratitude waiting for them,

a touch of deference, some kind of appeal from the loneliness and desolation of a doubtful position to the comfortable regions of unaspersed respectability. They could not help feeling that Daisy, though by no fault of hers, was yet one who should ask and accept as favours what among equals are no more than courtesies. The knowledge of this point of view drove Daisy into strong revolt against it: she was more, not less, offhand than of yore; more, not less, ready to ignore people with whom she was not in sympathy; more, not less, unscrupulous in outraging the small conventions of society. And, unfortunately, Norburn was a man to encourage instead of discouraging her in this course, for conventions and respectability had always been a red rag to him. In the result the isolation of the Medland household from most of the families of their own level in the town, and from all of a higher, if there were

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any such, grew from day to day, until it seemed that Daisy's "We three against the world!" was to come true so far as the world meant the social circle of their neighbours. Medland himself was too engrossed with larger matters to note the progress of this outlawry: when he did for a moment turn his thoughts from the campaign he was engrossed with, there was only one face in Kirton society whose countenance or aversion troubled him: and that one was sternly and irrevocably turned away.

Thus Daisy, though she might be cheered in the streets, and though she bore herself with exuberant gaiety out of doors, passed lonely evenings, especially when Norburn left her to help in the country elections. The Chief Justice had been to see her once, and Lady Perry had left a card, but she was almost always alone, and then the exuberant gaiety would evaporate. One evening about half-past

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nine, she was sitting alone, wishing her father or her lover would come back to her, when there was a knock at the door. Alicia Derosne came in, with a hasty, almost furtive, step.

“You are alone, aren’t you? I saw Mr. Medland was away.”

“Yes, I am alone,” said Daisy, doubtful whether to put on her armour or not.

“Oh, Daisy, I’ve never been able to come and wish you joy yet. I wouldn’t do it by letter. I’m so glad. You are happy, aren’t you?” and she took Daisy’s two hands and kissed her.

“Yes, I am very happy. It’s sweet of you to come. How did you manage it?”

Neither cared to pretend that Lady Eynesford would approve of such a visit.

“Oh, I slipped out,” said Alicia, nestling beside her friend. “Poor child! What things you have been through! Still—you have Mr. Norburn.”

“Yes; with him and father I really don’t mind.”  
She paused, and then there slipped out, in lower tone, a tell-tale “Much.”

Alicia answered it with a caress.

“How brave you are!” she said. “Does—does he mind?”

“Mr. Norburn?”

“I meant your father.”

“He has no time to mind now. We are fighting,” said Daisy.

“Ah, a man can fight, can’t he?”

“Oh, but so can a girl. I’m fighting too.”

“I’ve no one to fight for.”

Daisy turned quickly towards her: there were tears in her eyes. Surely she was a sorry comforter: perhaps she had come as much seeking as to bring comfort.

“You don’t look very happy,” remarked Daisy.

“Don’t talk about me, Daisy. It will never make

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the least difference between you and me., I wanted to tell you. You know we are going? You must write to me, dear, and some day you and Mr. Norburn must come to England and stay with me, when I have my own house. Promise now! I—I don't want to lose you quite."

"Of course I will write, but you won't care for our news when you are gone."

"Indeed I shall care to hear of you and Mr. Norburn, and—of your father too."

"Will you really? Oh, then I shall have lots to say. Father always gives one lots to say about him," said Daisy proudly.

"Tell him he mustn't despair."

"From you?"

"No, no. From you."

"Oh, of course I tell him that."

"I—I mustn't send him any message."

"You're not against him too, are you, Alicia?"

"I'm not much against him," whispered Alicia. "And, if any one says I am, Daisy, don't believe it of me. I must go, dear. I shall be missed. I shall come again."

"Do," said Daisy. "I'm just a little lonely now," and she nearly broke down, as Alicia took her in her arms.

Thus they stood when Medland, suddenly returned on an urgent matter, opened the door, and, standing, looked at them for a moment. Alicia seemed to feel his presence; with a start she looked up. He crossed the room, holding out his hand.

"It is like you," he said simply.

She shook her head.

"I—I did not know you were here."

"I am not supposed to be," he answered, kissing his daughter.

Alicia hastily said good-bye, Medland not

trying to detain her. But he signed to Daisy to stay in the room and escorted Alicia downstairs.

At the hall door he kept her, laying his hand on the door.

“Yes, that was very kind. Poor child! She wants friends.”

“I can do very little—I—”

“Yes, I know. And you are going?”

“Yes, in three weeks.”

He was silent for a moment: then he looked in her eyes.

“You know the worst now,” he said in a low voice.

“Yes,” she murmured, trying to escape his gaze.

“And you still say what you said before?”

“I—I say nothing. I must go.”

“Very likely we shall never speak alone

again as long as we live—perhaps never at all."

"Isn't it best?" she murmured.

"Best!" he echoed. "You are happy in it then?"

"I happy! Ah!"

He could not miss the meaning of her tone.

"Most people," he said, "would call me a criminal for what I am going to say—and you a fool if you listen. Alicia, will you face it all and come to me?" and he drew nearer to her. "I know what I ask—but I know too what I have to give."

"Let me go," she gasped, as though his hand were on her.

"Can you do it?" he asked. "I needn't tell you to think what it means."

"I don't mind that," she broke out suddenly.

“Don’t think it’s that. I would face all that if—if I could——”

“Trust me?”

She bowed her head.

“You can never trust me again?”

“Why make me say it?”

“But it is so?”

Again she bowed her head.

“It is still—horrible?”

He drew back and opened the door, letting in the cool night air.

“Good-bye,” he said. “It’s your last word?”

She seemed to sway towards him and away again.

“I shan’t ask again,” he went on, still in that calm, low voice. “I shall accept what you say now. You think me—unclean?”

Her silence was answer as she stepped out into the path.

“ For the last time ! ”

“ I can’t,” she said, with a sob. “ You—you know why.”

“ And yet, if you loved me ! ”

“ Loved you ! ” she cried. “ But no, no, no ! ” and she turned and disappeared in the gloom.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DECISION OF THE ORACLE.

“I SEE from Tomes,” observed Eleanor Scaife to the Chief Justice, as he handed her a cup of tea, “that all the elections are on the same day in New Lindsey.”

“They are,” he answered. “A good thing, don’t you think?”

“But if a man wants to vote in two places?”

“Then it’s kind to prevent him, because if he does it he’s sent to prison.”

“Oh! And when do the results appear?”

“Here at Kirton? Oh, any time between nine

and midnight, or an hour later. One or two are left over as a rule. They're published at the Town-hall, and it's generally rather a lively scene."

"And how is it going to go?"

The Chief Justice lowered his voice.

"Medland will be beaten. He can't believe it and his friends won't, but he'll be beaten badly all over the country, except here in Kirton. Kirton he'll carry pretty solid, but that won't be enough."

"How many seats are there here?"

"Oh, here and in this district, which is under Kirton influence, about two-and-twenty, and he ought to get eighteen or nineteen of them ; but what's that out of eighty members ?"

"And what's the reason ? Merely his policy or——?"

"Well, his policy a good deal. All the manufacturers and capitalists are straining every nerve to give him such a thrashing as will keep him out

for years, and they spare neither time nor money nor hard words. I don't blame 'em. And then, of course, the other thing counts. It hits him where he was strong—among the religious folk. Puttock's their special man, and Puttock never lets it alone."

"What, do they talk about it in public?"

"Well, I should rather think they did. Oh, we fight with the gloves off in New Lindsey."

"After all, if it's a matter that ought to count, it ought to be talked about," remarked Miss Scaife thoughtfully.

"I suppose so," answered Sir John doubtfully; "only it always sounds a little mean, you know."

Eleanor did not attempt to reconcile this seeming contradiction.

"So Sir Robert will be back? Well, Mary will be delighted."

"It doesn't so much matter to her, as you're going."

"No, but she will. For my own part, I like Sir Robert, but his Government rather lacks variety, doesn't it? It's not exactly thrilling."

"That's very high praise."

"I hardly meant it to be," laughed Eleanor. "However, as you say, it doesn't matter much now to us."

"No, nor to me."

"Then it's true you're resigning?"

"Yes, in a few weeks. I'm just holding on to—"

"See this crisis through, I suppose?"

"Oh dear, no. The crisis, as you call it, Miss Scaife, don't matter to me—nor I to it. I'm holding on to complete another year's service and get fifty pound more pension."

"You're very practical, Sir John."

“ High praise again ! ”

“ Perhaps hardly meant again ! ”

“ I’m sure Lady Eynesford teaches her household the value of practicality.”

“ Well, Mary is practical ; and I suppose Dick must be called so now—Miss Granger’s an excellent match. Oh, I suppose we all pass muster pretty well, except Alicia.”

“ Miss Derosne is a visionary ? ”

“ A little bit of one, I often tell her.”

“ It’s an added grace in a pretty girl,” said Sir John.

“ I said *I* was practical,” observed Miss Scaife.

“ But you need no added graces,” he returned, smiling.

“ A palpable evasion ! ”

Some days had passed since Medland’s interview with Alicia. He had left Kirton the morning after, and, as the day of the election drew nearer and

nearer, news of him came from all parts of the colony. Wherever the opposition was strongest and hostility most bitter, he flung himself into the fray ; at moments it seemed as though he would wrest victory from an adverse fate, but when he went away, the effect of his presence gradually evaporated, and his work was half undone before he had been gone a day. In the Governor's household the accounts of his doings were allowed to pass in silence ; they had become a forbidden topic. Alicia might devour them in solitude, and the Governor himself watch them with an almost sympathetic interest ; Lady Eynesford ignored them altogether, and seemed not to see Medland's colours and his watchwords that glared at her in the streets of Kirton. Sir Robert was quietly confident, and Kilshaw fiercely exultant ; Medland's friends hoped against hope, and, secure of their position in the capital, flooded the country with eager missionaries. Passion ran high,

and there had been one or two disturbing incidents. Sir Robert was refused a hearing in the Jubilee Hall ; Kilshaw had been forced to escape violence by a hasty flight, when he tried to address a meeting in the North-East ward ; and there had been something like a free fight between the factions in Kettle Street. Captain Heseltine stated his opinion that if Sir Robert won, there would be "some fun" in Kirton, and was understood to mean that the Queen's Peace would be broken. Apparently the police authorities were of the same way of thinking, for at their request all preparations were made for calling out the Mounted Volunteers. Lord Eynesford declared that he would stand no nonsense, and a certain number of timid persons made arrangements to be out of Kirton on the all-important day.

At last it came, and wore itself away in a fever of excitement. While the poll was open there was

no time to waste in quarrelling or parading, but in the evening, when the ballot-boxes were giving up their secret, the streets were crowded with dense throngs. The political leaders came dropping in from the country round. Medland was away and did not return, but Kilshaw was at the Club, and Puttock, all the local politicians, and most other men of note ; for the Club was nearly opposite the Hall, where the crowd was thickest, and where the result would soon be proclaimed. Just below, one Todd, a well-known mob-orator, had mounted on a large packing-case and was exhorting the people to stand by Medland, happen what might ; the police had tried to get near him and prevent him causing an obstruction, but his friends formed so dense a ring and offered such resistance that the attempt was prudently abandoned, and the sound of Mr. Todd's sweeping denunciations fell on the ears of the members as they talked within.

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"I say, Kilshaw," called Captain Heseltine, who was by the window, "if you want to hear what you are, you'd better come here. Todd's letting you have it."

Kilshaw lounged to the window and put his head out, smiling scornfully.

"A lot of loafers and thieves," he remarked.

The crowd saw him. He was the especial object of their anger, ever since his share in Benyon's career had become public. He was greeted with an angry yell; the orator, seizing the occasion, shook a huge fist at him. Kilshaw laughed in reply, holding his cigar in his hand. There was an ugly rush at the Club door; an answering charge from the police; some oaths and some screams.

"You'd better vanish," suggested the Captain. "Your popularity is momentarily eclipsed."

"Damn the fellows," said Kilshaw. "They may storm the place if they like—I'll not move."

Matters were indeed becoming somewhat critical, when a loud shout was heard from in front of the Hall. The crowd forgot Kilshaw, forgot Mr. Todd, and rushed across the road. The first result was up!

For the next half-hour wild exultation reigned in the streets, and gloom predominated in the Club. The Kirton returns came out first, and, as the Chief Justice had prophesied, Medland swept the capital from end to end. A solid band of twenty members was elected in his interest, and he himself had an immense majority. The crowd was beside itself; all thought of defeat was at an end; they began to laugh, and smoke, and dive into the taverns in friendly groups to drink; they even flung jests up at Kilshaw, and only hooted good-humouredly when he cried,

“Wait a bit, my boys!”

Thus an hour passed without further news.

Then the country results began to arrive. Among the first was that from Medland's own constituency : he was beaten by above a hundred votes. Anticipated as this issue was, it was greeted with a loud groan, soon changed to an exultant cheer when it was declared that Coxon had lost his seat ; no event, short of the defeat of Kilshaw himself, would have pleased the crowd so much ; even in the Club men seemed very resigned ; only Coxon's little band mourned the fall of their chief.

"A facer for him," remarked the Captain. Mr. Kilshaw smiled.

"Coxon generally falls on his feet," he remarked.

This victory was almost the last excuse the crowd found for cheering. The figures came in thick and fast now, and the tale they told was of Medland's utter defeat. By twelve o'clock the issue in seventy-five seats was declared ; of the other five, four were safe for Sir Robert ; and

Medland had only twenty-nine supporters. Puttock and Sir Robert were returned, and Kilshaw had a triumphant majority. His was among the last announcements, and it was greeted with an angry roar of such volume that the Club window filled in a moment. The crowd, tired of their disappointing watch, turned away from the Jubilee Hall, and flocked together underneath the window.

“Why don’t you return thanks?” asked Captain Heseltine.

Kilshaw was drinking a glass of brandy and soda-water. He jumped up, glass in hand, and, going to the window, bowed to the angry mob and drank a toast to his own success before their eyes. Mr. Todd’s gross bulk pushed its way to the front.

“Come down here,” he shouted, “and talk to us, if you dare !”

Kilshaw smilingly shook his head.

“Three cheers for Sir Robert !” he cried,

"How's your friend Benham?" shouted one.

"We'll serve you the same," yelled another; "come down;" and a third, whose partisanship outran his moral sense, proposed a cheer for Mr. François Gaspard.

"I think you'll have to sleep here," said the Captain.

"Not I," answered Kilshaw. "They daren't touch me."

"Hum!" said the Captain, doubtfully regarding the crowd. "I don't know that I'd care to insure you, if you go down now."

"We'll take you through," cried half-a-dozen young men, the sons of well-born or rich families, who were heart and soul with him, and asked for nothing better than a "row," with any one indeed, but above all with the mob which they scorned, and which had out-voted them in their own town.

The tramp of horses was heard outside. Two lines of mounted police were making their way slowly down the street. A moment later two voices sounded loud in altercation. The officer in command of the force was remonstrating with Big Todd; Big Todd was asserting that he had as much right as any one else to stand in the middle of Victoria Street and speak to his friends; the officer, strong in the letter of the law, maintained that no one, neither Big Todd nor another, had a right to adopt this course of action, or to do anything else than walk along the street whither his business might lead him.

“And they call this free speech!” cried Big Todd.

“Get on with you,” said the officer.

“Now’s your time,” remarked the Captain. “Slip in between the two lines and you’ll get through.”

Kilshaw and his volunteer escort accepted the suggestion, and, linking arms, walked down-stairs. The Captain, after a brief inward struggle, followed them. Their appearance at the Club door was the signal for fresh hoots and groans.

“Now then, are you going?” said the officer to Big Todd.

The burly fellow cast a look round on his supporters.

“When I’m tired o’ being here,” he answered.

Kilshaw’s band slipped in between the first and second rank. The officer touched his horse with the spur, and it sprang forward. Big Todd, with an oath, caught the bridle, and another man seized the rider by the leg. He struck out sharply, and the line of police moved forward.

“Stand up to ‘em, boys,” cried Big Todd, and he aimed a blow with his stick at his antagonist.

The young men round Kilshaw looked at one

another and began to press forward. They wanted to join in.

A voice from behind them cried out warningly, "None of that, gentlemen! You must leave it to us," and at the same instant the first rank seemed to leave them. The order to advance had been given, and the *mélée* had begun. The rear rank advancing covered the members of the Club from attack.

"We seem to be spectators," observed Captain Heseltine, in a disappointed tone. He had earnestly hoped that some one would assault him.

Just ahead the fight was hot round Big Todd. The police were determined to arrest him, and had closed round where he stood. The big man was fighting like a lion, and some half-dozen were trying to protect him. On either side of this group the line of police passed on, driving the crowd before them. Their horses were trotting now, and

the people ran before them or dodged into side streets and escaped. Big Todd and his little band were sore pressed. Todd was bleeding from the head and his right hand was numbed from a blow. He was down once, but up again in a second. As he rose, he caught sight of Kilshaw's scornful smile, and, swearing savagely, with a sudden rush he burst the ring round him and made for the arch-enemy. Kilshaw raised his arm to shield himself, Captain Heseltine stepped forward and deftly put out his foot. Big Todd, tripped in the manner of the old football, fell heavily to the ground, striking his bullet poll on the hard road.

Hector was slain. The Trojans scoured over the plain. Victoria Street was cleared, and Big Todd was borne on a stretcher to the police-station hard by.

“That fellow would have caught me a crack but for you, Heseltine,” said Mr. Kilshaw,

A police-superintendent rode up.

"If you'd go home, gentlemen," he said, "our work would be easier. The trouble's not all over yet, I'm afraid. I'll send some of my men with you, Mr. Kilshaw, if you please, sir."

Kilshaw made a wry face.

"I wish I had my men," he said. "The Mounted Volunteers would teach these fellows a lesson."

"Well, we may see that before we're many days older, sir," answered the officer. "Mr. Medland 'll be here to-morrow, and heaven knows what they'll be up to then."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### STEALING A MARCH.

ALICIA DEROSNE had a fantastic dream that night. She saw Medland again chasing a butterfly, as she had seen him on the day he came to Government House to receive his office. The butterfly floated always just over his head, and he always came near to catching it, yet never caught it. Then, by one of sleep's strange transformations, she seemed to be herself in spirit in the butterfly, and she knew that it flew so near because desire brought it, that it longed to be caught, and yet, at the last, by some sudden impulse, avoided his net. At last, as if wearied, he turned from her to another

fluttering thing, and that he caught. And she heard a great murmur of voices applauding him, and he smiled and was content with his prize. Then she, the first butterfly, could not be happy unless she were caught also, envying the other, and she went and fluttered and spread her wings before his eyes, but he would not heed her, nor stretch the net over her, but smiled in triumph at the bright colours of his prize and the murmur of applause. And, with drooping wings, the first butterfly fell to the ground and died.

It needed no Joseph to interpret this dream. When he had called, she would not come. Now he would forget her and turn to the life of ambition and power that he loved. He would rule men, and trouble his head or his heart no more with the vagaries of girls and the strict scruples of their code. And she—what was there left for her? “The last time,” he had said. There was nothing

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for her to do but what the neglected butterfly had done. In a few weeks more the sea would lie between them, and she would be no more to him, nor he to her, than a memory—a memory soon to fade in him, whose days and thoughts were so full ; in her, it seemed, always to endure, ousting everything else, reigning in triumphant sorrow in an empty heart.

The news of the final result of the elections which Eleanor Scaife brought her in the morning while she was still in bed, presented to her mind another picture of the man, which appealed to her almost more strongly.

“It’s a knock-down blow for Mr. Medland, isn’t it ?” asked Eleanor, sitting on the side of the bed. “As we’re alone together, I may dare to say that I’m rather sorry. I didn’t want him to win, but it’s very hard on him to be crushed like this. How he must feel it !”

"He seems to have won in Kirton."

"Oh yes, just the town mob is with him. Fancy coming down to that! Of course he'll be quite powerless, compared to what he was. I wonder if he'll stay in politics. Captain Heseltine said some people thought that he'd throw the whole thing up and retire into private life."

"Yes, I'm sorry too," said Alicia, who lay all this while with her face away from Eleanor and towards the wall.

"And then his daughter's going to be married, and, of course, can never be such a companion to him as she has been; he'll be very much alone. Upon my word, Alicia, I'm getting quite sentimental about the man, and it's all his own fault, really. Why does he make it impossible for respectable people to follow him?" After a short pause, Miss Scaife suddenly laughed. "Do you know," she asked, "what that shameless Dick

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says? He says I ought to marry Mr. Medland, because we're both 'emancipated.' Really I'm not quite so 'emancipated' as Mr. Medland seems to be."

Alicia smiled faintly.

"What an idea!" she said, at last turning her face to her friend.

"He was only joking, of course. Assuming Mr. Medland asked me, and I'm sure nothing could be further from his thoughts, I'm afraid I should have to decline the honour. Wasn't it impertinent of Dick? It's lucky Mary didn't hear him. But, my dear, you must get up. All sorts of things are going on. It's most exciting."

"I thought all the excitement was over," said Alicia languidly.

"Oh, no. There was a riot in the streets last night, and they arrested some popular favourite and took him to prison. The mob's furious, and

the police are afraid of a disturbance when he's brought before the magistrate this morning. Then Mr. Medland is to arrive at twelve o'clock, and they're afraid of another riot then. Sir Robert was here at half-past eight, and at his request the Governor authorised calling out the Mounted Volunteers to keep order. Lord Eynesford says he'll go with them. Do get up," and Eleanor went off, eager to hear the latest news. The present situation was justifying her tenacious opinion that new communities were interesting.

In spite of her many inquiries, her intelligence was not quite the latest. The police had stolen a march on the crowd, and Big Todd had been quietly brought before the seat of justice at nine o'clock, remanded for a week, and carried off to the prison, which was situated outside the town, about half-a-mile beyond Government House. The van containing the captive had rolled un-

suspected through the streets, and it was not till the crowd had waited an hour outside the court that the secret leaked out. The outwitted men were in a fury. The mounted police lined the sides of the street, and their impassive demeanour seemed to rouse the mob to fresh anger. There had been a plan to rescue Big Todd, now it was too late, and men looked at one another in sullen wrath. The crowd drifted off towards the railway station, thinking to welcome Medland. The Mounted Volunteers were on guard there. They saw Kilshaw at the head of his company and hailed him with a groan. Behind the ranks, the Governor sat on his horse, flanked by his *aides-de-camp* and talking to Sir Robert Perry. No one was allowed within the station-yard, every one was compelled to move about, the preparations were complete, to riot would be to run against a stone wall.

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Suddenly an idea, a suggestion, flew through the crowd. It was greeted with surly smiles and emphatic nods. To the surprise of the officers and of the Governor, the crowd began to melt away. Splitting up in twos and threes, it sauntered off, as if it had made up its mind to submit quietly to the inevitable. Soon only women and children were left, and the Governor began to feel that the array of force was almost ridiculously out of proportion to the need. The whole thing was, as Captain Heseltine regretfully observed, "fizzling out," and he proposed to go home to lunch.

Medland's train arrived half-an-hour later, and he came out of the station, looking round in surprise at the martial aspect of the scene. Then he smiled.

"We look rather asses," whispered Heseltine.  
"I wonder if they did it on purpose."

Medland came down the steps and found himself

almost face to face with Kilshaw. The ex-Premier was smoking a cigar, and he took it out of his mouth, in order to smile more freely.

"If," he said to Kilshaw, "it's not dangerous to public order, I should like a cab."

Kilshaw heard a shamefaced, stifled giggle from his men behind him and turned very red. The next minute Sir Robert came up, holding out his hand.

"This is a great compliment to you," he said, smiling.

"Evidently beyond my deserts," answered Medland, getting into his cab. "To my house," he called to the man, and was driven rapidly away.

The Governor rode up to Sir Robert with a look of vexation on his face.

"The sooner we end this farce the better," he said. "I'm going home. I suppose you'll send the men to quarters."

"I really don't understand it," protested Sir Robert. "They looked like mischief."

"I suppose we frightened them. Oh, no doubt you were right," and the Governor turned his horse.

Suddenly the figure of a man on horseback, going at a gallop, was seen in the distance. The Governor drew rein and waited. The man came nearer, and, as soon as he was within earshot, he shouted,

"The prison! the prison! They've all gone to the prison."

"What?" cried the Governor.

"All the crowd," panted the messenger. "They mean to have Big Todd out. We've only got ten men there, and the people are threatening to burn the place down if he's not given up."

"By Jove, they've jockeyed us!" cried Captain Heseltine, and he turned to his chief for orders.

"We must be after them," exclaimed the Governor. "Let the orders be given. You, Heseltine, go and bring up the police. This looks like business."

The column was soon on the march, followed by a string of women and children, which was speedily outstripped when the word to trot was given. The outskirts of the town were reached; they met man after man who told them of a gathering crowd round the prison; they overtook more men, armed with cudgels, who slunk on one side and tried to hide their sticks. They reached the gates of Government House, and Lord Eynesford spied his wife and Alicia looking out of the windows of the lodge.

"Go and tell them what's up," he said to Flemyng. "Say there's no danger," and the column trotted on.

"This is what Mr. Medland has brought us to,"

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observed Lady Eynesford, when Mr. Flemyngh made his report. "I'm glad we've done with him, anyhow, aren't you, Eleanor?"

"Perhaps we haven't," suggested Eleanor. "I wonder if he's come back."

"No doubt he's encouraging this riot. I only hope he'll get the treatment he deserves."

Alicia stood by in silence. The little room felt close and hot. She was tired and worn out, for she had spent the morning writing a letter that seemed very hard to write.

"Mightn't we go into the garden?" she asked. "There's no danger to us, is there, Mr. Flemyngh?"

"Oh dear, no, Miss Derosne. They're only thinking of Big Todd. I'll go on if you don't want me, Lady Eynesford."

He trotted off and overtook the rest just as they came in sight of the prison. The crowd was thick round it.

"By heaven, they've got the door open!" cried Heseltine.

They had. The heavy door hung on its hinges, and, as the Governor drew nearer, he saw the prisoner, Big Todd himself, in the centre of the crowd. There were near three thousand there, almost all men; most had sticks, here and there the sun caught the gleam of a knife or the glint from a revolver-barrel. A rude kind of rampart of the tables and chairs from the gaol formed a slight makeshift barricade, and behind it, the crowd, backed by the building, stood waiting for the attack.

The Governor halted.

"It really looks rather serious," he said.

Sir Robert Perry, whose fat cob was panting with unusual exertions, nodded assent.

"We don't want bloodshed, if we can help it," he observed.

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"No, but we'll have that fellow," said the Governor curtly, "or I'll know the reason why."

His old instincts were astir in him. He had been a soldier in his time, and he almost regretted that his first duty was to reason with these men. Endeavouring to carry out this duty, he said to Heseltine,

"Go and say I'll give them three minutes to hand over Todd and disperse."

Heseltine rode forward till he came to the barricade and delivered his message, adding,

"Look sharp. There you are, Todd! Now come along, my man."

"Come and fetch me," grinned Big Todd.

"So we will," answered the Captain, smiling, "but you'd better come quietly."

"Look here, sir. Say no more about what happened last night and we'll give the Governor back his prison. We ain't hurt it, not to speak of."

Heseltine laughed.

"You're an insolent scoundrel," he said.

"You'd better get a bit further off before you talk like that, young man," growled a fierce-looking little fellow.

"Let the gentleman alone, Tim," said Big Todd.  
"He's a flag o' truce."

"Then you won't come?" asked the Captain.

"Declined with thanks, sir," bowed Big Todd.  
Heseltine rode back and delivered the reply.  
An angry flush crossed Lord Eynesford's face.

"Very well," he said shortly, and turned to the Colonel. "Colonel," he said, "I want your men to scatter that crowd and bring Todd here. Don't fire without asking me again. Use the flat of the sword unless the crowd use knives or shoot; if they do, use the edge. I can't come with you, I wish I could."

"May I go, sir?" broke simultaneously from Dick and Heseltine.

"No," answered Lord Eynesford shortly.

"What a damned shame!" grumbled Dick.

The Colonel had spoken to the captains of his two companies, Kilshaw and another, and they in their turn had briefly communicated the Governor's orders to their men. Everything was ready, and the Colonel turned a last inquiring glance towards the Governor.

"Yes," said Lord Eynesford; but at the same moment a loud cheer rang out from the defenders of the gaol—

"Three cheers for Jimmy Medland!" they cried.

The Governor turned and saw the ex-Premier leaping from a cab and hurrying towards them.

"Stop!" cried Medland. "Stop!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A BEATEN MAN'S THOUGHTS.

ON reaching his home, Medland had found that Norburn had arrived before him, and was engaged in the task of consoling Daisy for the untoward issue of the fight. Daisy, on her part, was full of praise for the valour of Big Todd, and delighted to hear of the sort of fiasco that had waited on the military display at the station. Safe from the eyes of all save those who loved him, Medland did not maintain the indifferent air that he had displayed in public. In vain they reminded him of the swift reactions in political

affairs, of the sturdy band that still owned his leadership, and of the devotion of all Kirton to him, or bade him think that he was himself almost a young man, and that this defeat was but a check and not an end to his career. For the moment the buoyancy was out of him ; he did not care to discuss hopes or projects, and sat silent in his chair, while Norburn sketched new campaigns and energetic raids on Sir Robert's position. Daisy knew her father : these hours of despondency were the penalty he paid for the glowing confidence and rebounding hope that had made him the man and the power he was.

“ Let him alone a little while,” she whispered to her lover. “ Something will rouse him soon, and he'll be himself again.”

She put his letters by him, and the two left him to solitude in his study. He was vaguely surprised that no crowd had assembled to escort him to his

house, and that the street was so quiet ; he supposed that his adherents felt much as he did, too discouraged to make a parade, or try to hide their wounds under the pretence of a brave show ; yet he was sensitive enough to every breath of popular sentiment to be hurt at the first sign of neglect. Perhaps they had had enough of him, perhaps they were looking for a new leader. No ; that could hardly be, or they would not have elected all his friends. It was just that they felt as he did, beaten, soundly beaten, and had fled to their dens to lick their sores.

He listlessly stretched out his hand towards the letters and began to open them. Here were belated requests for help or advice, calculations of majorities and prophecies of victory, written at the last moment in unquenchable faith, to be read now with a weary smile of irony. Here too were honest, admiring condolences. “ Better luck next

time"—“Never despair,” and so forth--side by side with anonymous and scurrilous gloatings over his fall. Once he laughed out loud : a zealous student compared him at length and in detail to Cleon, and ended with an ode of triumph which, he said, would appear in the press the next day or so. Medland pushed the heap away with an impatient sigh, but one note remained under his hand and he took it up, for it seemed different from the rest. He undid the envelope and glanced at the signature ; then he sat up in sudden interest, for it was signed “Alicia Derosne.”

“ You will be surprised,” she said, “ that I should write ; but I doubted if you understood the other night, and I can’t be misunderstood by you. If you were what I once thought you, I would do all you ask, whatever it cost me, but I can’t now. It’s all different now. That thing makes it all different. You will think it a poor reason and a

strange idea—I know you will ; but your thinking it strange is just what makes it strongest to me. You may not understand—I'm afraid you won't—but you must believe that that is the only thing. Please don't try to see me, but send one line to say you believe me.—ALICIA DEROSNE.

Good-bye.”

At first he thought of what he read only as a fresh defeat, another drop of bitterness in a brimming cup, and he let the letter fall, despising himself for caring about such a matter. But he took it up again and re-read it, and the “Good-bye,” at the end—the stifled cry of pain—touched him ; she had finished the letter before she wrote that, for its ink was paler ; the rest had dried, that had been hastily blotted ; it was an after-impulse, a hint of the struggle with which she left her tenderness unexpressed. He pictured so well how she looked writing it, making her sacrifice at the altar of what

she held holy in herself. Whether she were right or wrong seemed now to his softer mood to be of little moment. He could not think that she was right, and yet it suited her so well to be wrong on such a point that he could hardly wish her to have been what to his mind seemed right. With the strange feeling of the end of things, of finality, that his defeat and despondency had brought to him, her decision fitted well. She would not come to him, but the ideal of her rested beautiful in the delicate pride and fastidiousness of her scruples and her purity. The sort of life he must lead, no less than that he had led, must needs have soiled the image and stained its spotless white. He was conscious that his reception of what she said was half the outcome of the moment in which her decision reached him; but yet he could not look before him, and the idea of himself, restored to his former mind, scornfully mocking what now

claimed reverence, angrily fighting against a merely fanciful hindrance, failed to dress itself like reality, though experience, half-smothered, protested that it would prove real. Now he was very sorry for her and for himself; but it was the sorrow of acquiescence, the pain of a vision that never could have had fulfilment, not the fierce disappointment of well-grounded hope. Though she were passing out of his life, yet she would always be in it and of it, and their unhappiness seemed to him a tie as close as could have been knit between them by any union.

He was interrupted by the entrance of his daughter and Norburn. They were troubled, as a glance at their happy faces told him, by no sense of the end of things; they were at the beginning, and he was amused to find that, while they deplored his defeat sincerely and resented it hotly, it yet had a bright side to them. It set

Jack Norburn at liberty ; he had now no official ties and there would be a lull in politics. How should two young people use such an interval better than in getting married ?

“ How indeed ? ” said Mr. Medland, smiling.

“ Then when we’re comfortably married,” said Daisy, “ and you’ve had a little rest, we’ll have at Sir Robert again, father ! Oh, and I’m so glad those tiresome Eynesfords are going—except Alicia, I mean ; I like her. I do hope the next people won’t be quite so—” And Daisy’s gesture indicated the inhuman exclusiveness and pride supposed to be harboured at Government House.

“ Well, we go our way and they go theirs,” said Norburn, with his good-humoured laugh. “ We’re happy in ours, I hope they’re happy in theirs. Then, as soon as Daisy can be ready, sir ? ”

“ Yes, as soon as Daisy can be ready,” assented Medland.

When, after thanks and some more rose-coloured prophecies, they were gone together, he rose and, hands in pockets, paced up and down the narrow room.

“Really, young Norburn has got the philosophy of it,” he mused. “He takes my daughter, and his philosophy takes the only other woman I care about! But I believe, after all, that it’s bad philosophy.”

He stretched his arms in weariness.

“Ah, I feel burnt out!” he said, sinking back into his chair. “I must answer this,” and he took up Alicia’s note again, only to fold it up and put it in his pocket.

“I can’t do it now. I must have some fresh air,” he exclaimed petulantly. “This place suffocates me.”

He opened the window and hailed a hack-victoria that was crawling by. Calling to Daisy

to tell her he was going for a drive, he ran downstairs and jumped in.

"Go to the Park," he said. "You needn't hurry."

The air revived his spirits. He leant back, sniffing its freshness, and finding the world very good. He met few people about and no one that he knew. The Park was empty, and the old horse jogged along peacefully. Insensibly he found himself thinking about what would happen when the new House met, and sparing a smile for Coxon's defeat, though he was afraid that gentleman would be only too well provided for. It struck him that a pitfall or two lay in Sir Robert's path, and he saw his way to giving Kilshaw a bad quarter of an hour over one of his election speeches. The only thing that he could not get away from was the thought of Alicia Derosne. He knew that there was to be nothing

more between him and her, and that she was going away soon, never to return to, soon in all probability to forget, New Lindsey ; yet all his doings and activities in the future—and his brain began now to be swift to plan them again—presented themselves to him, not in the actual happening, but as they would look when read by her. This lover's madness irritated him so much that at last he took her letter from his pocket and tore it into little bits, scattering them on the breeze. He could answer it well enough from memory, and perhaps it would be easier to be his own man again when he had no tangible, material reminder of her with him. These things only made a man nurse and cosset fine-drawn feelings, spying curiously into a heart that might get well if it were covered up and left alone.

A cheery voice roused him, and his carriage stopped.

"Well, tearing up your bills, eh?" called the Chief Justice from the side-walk. "You must be glad to be out of it."

"Not I," answered Medland, smiling. "Among other things, I wanted to appoint your successor."

"Ah, dreadful, dreadful! Young Coxon, isn't it? I've been laid up with a cold, and seen and heard nothing, but I fancy that's right."

"I suppose he'll do pretty well, but he's not the right man to come after you. However, I am powerless now."

"Yes, order is safe again. By the way, I hear your friends made a little disturbance last night."

"Oh, yes; that headstrong fellow Todd. We can never hold him. It came to nothing, I suppose?"

"They arrested him, you know. But, Medland, I doubt—"

The driver turned round suddenly.

"Did you say Medland, sir?" he asked the Chief Justice. "Is this gentleman Mr. Medland?"

"What, didn't you know me?"

"No, sir; I'm only just out from England. But, if you're Mr. Medland, don't you know, sir—begging your pardon—what's happened about Todd?"

"No; what?"

"There's a fine row up at the prison, sir. Two or three thousand of 'em went up there this morning to take him out, and the Governor's up there with the Volunteers, and they say there's going to be a big fight and——"

"The fools!" exclaimed Medland. "I must go, Chief Justice."

"Why, what can you do?"

"Stop it, of course. Here, drive to the prison—drive like fury. Good-bye, Chief Justice. Come and see me soon. Get on, man, get on!"

The old horse was whipped up unmercifully, and the Chief Justice watched Medland disappear in a cloud of dust. He took off his hat to wipe his brow. Two little fragments of the white paper which Medland scattered had settled upon it.

“Poof!” The Chief Justice blew them off and they fluttered down on the grass. He stooped and picked up the larger bit. If he had looked at it, he would have read “Good-bye”; but he did not. The amber end of his cigarette-tube was loose: he unscrewed it, twisted the little bit of paper round the screw, and fitted the end on again.

“Capital!” said the Chief Justice. “It might have been made for it. Poor old Medland!”

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE END OF A TUMULT.

“STOP!” he shouted ; “stop!” and, taking advantage of the momentary pause, he made his way to the Governor.

“Let me speak to them, sir,” he said ; “I think I can bring them to reason.”

But Lord Eynesford’s spirit was roused.

“I must request you to leave the matter to me, Mr. Medland,” he answered stiffly. “They have had their opportunity of submitting to the law peaceably, and they have chosen to disregard it.”

“If you will give me five minutes, sir,” said

Medland, very humbly. He loved the rough fellows who were acting so foolishly: perhaps something in his words had given them an excuse. He could not bear to think of them coming to harm, even through their own fault.

“I can’t, sir,” answered the Governor sharply. “I have the dignity of the Crown, which I represent, to think of. Pray stand aside, sir;” and he added to the Colonel—“Your orders are not altered.”

Medland’s quick eye measured the distance between him and the rioters. He was standing near the Governor, at the side of the troops, but a little in advance of their line. A run might bring him to them before the troops could reach them. If they did not resist there could be no bloodshed. There was yet a chance, and suddenly he dashed across in front of the line, crying, “Don’t resist! don’t resist!”

At the very moment of his start the Colonel had given the word to charge. No man saw clearly how it happened, but there was a forward dash, then an exclamation from one of the Volunteers, as he reined his horse back on its haunches, a wild cry from the barricade, and a loud shout, "Halt!" from Kilshaw. The line was stopped, and Kilshaw rode swiftly up to where the trooper had wrenched back his horse. Medland lay on the ground in front of the horse. The man had seen him too late to avoid him; he had been knocked down and trampled with the hoofs. His face was pale, and a slight twist of the features told of pain. He held his hand to his right side.

Kilshaw was off his horse in an instant.

"Back there, back!" he cried. "Don't crowd on him."

The Governor rode up; a group gathered round. There was no more thought of the charge. The

rioters, after an instant, broke the barricade and came out, one by one, timidly making for the spot.

"Here," whispered Kilshaw to Dick Derosne, "you lift his head. He won't want to see me," and he drew back behind the wounded man.

The Governor dismounted and stood by his brother, but before Dick could lift Medland's head, a rough woman, in a coarse gown, pushed through, elbowing him and Lord Eynesford aside.

"Let me, gentlemen," she said, her eyes full of tears, as she pillow'd his head in her lap. "He's always been for us, Mr. Medland has," she explained. "Give me a clean handkerchief, one of you."

The Governor handed his, and she wiped the clammy moisture from the forehead and hands.

Medland opened his eyes.

"The horse kicked me in the side," he murmured faintly, "here, on the right—low down. I'm in pain."

Then he saw Dick Derosne.

"Mr. Derosne!" he called faintly, and Dick knelt down to listen. "Tell your sister I believe."

"What?" asked Dick in sheer surprise.

"You heard?" asked Medland petulantly.

"Yes—that you believe."

"Well, tell her," and he turned away his head.

There was a little bustle outside the group, and then Big Todd burst through.

"Is he killed?" he cried.

Medland saw him and stretched out his hand. Big Todd caught it, and the dying man pressed the fellow's knotted fist. Perhaps he saw in Todd the type of the "Great Beast," clumsy, often

wrong-headed, but honest at heart, that he loved and worked for.

“What did you want to be such an infernal fool for, man ?” he said, with a little smile. Then his eyes closed, and the woman wiped his forehead and kissed him.

The group round him drew back, leaving the woman and Todd near him. Presently some dozen of the rioters brought the top of a table from their barricade, and lifted him on to it. Then Big Todd spake to the Governor.

“There’ll be no more fighting,” he said. “I’ll give myself up, but I’d like to help the chaps to take him home first.”

The Governor nodded, and they raised the table on their shoulders and set out for Kirton. Behind them came the woman and a few more of the same class; some children stole out from the back of the gaol and took their places.

After them marched the rioters, and last of all the Governor, his party, and the troops. And in this order the procession passed along. And some time before it had gone far, Medland bled to death inwardly; his strength failed him and he gave a convulsive shiver, opened his eyes for the last time to the sky, and then lay still under the rough coat that Big Todd had thrown over him.

“Dick, Dick,” whispered the Governor, when they came near Government House, “ride on and tell them.”

Lady Eynesford, Eleanor Scaife, and Alicia were standing at the gate. They had hardly seen the procession turn a corner and come into sight before Dick galloped up.

“What is it, Dick?” cried Lady Eynesford.  
“Willie’s not hurt?”

“No—it’s—it’s Mr. Medland.”

Eleanor was standing by Alicia, and she felt a sudden clutch on her arm.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"I'm afraid he's very badly hurt," answered Dick, and drawing near his sister he whispered, "Al, he sent you a message. I don't know what it means, but—he believes."

One swift glance told him she heard, then her eyes fixed themselves on the advancing crowd, and the burden the men carried.

They halted a moment. The table was lowered; a man—apparently a doctor—had ridden up. He looked at the burden they bore, then he spread the rough coat again over the body and signed to them to go on. Dick stepped forward and asked a question. Returning, he said briefly,

"He's dead."

Alicia swayed heavily against Eleanor Scaife.

Eleanor threw her arm round her waist, and answered the moan she heard with—"Hush, darling!" while Alicia, with parted lips and straining eyes, watched him carried by.

As they had escorted him home on the day when he first became their ruler, so they took him to his home now, the throng of mourners ever growing as the people poured out of the town to meet them, until they reached his house and halted before his door, waiting for some one who should dare to carry the news to the fair-haired girl who had met him in triumph when he came before.

In Kirton the name of "Jimmy Medland" is still remembered, and his grave does not lack continual flowers. In far-off England few remember him, and his name is seldom spoken, save when a very old white-haired man comes to stay with a lady in one of the Midland shires. Then, when they are

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alone, when her husband has gone hunting and the children are away, and there is no other ear to listen, Alicia will sometimes talk to Sir John of Mr. Medland, what he was and was not, what he did and dreamed, how he lived and died, and how the men of Kirton love his memory.

“ It all seems like a dream now,” she says, “ but it’s a dream I can never forget.”

And Sir John presses her hand, for perhaps he guesses what she has not told him.

His daughter wrote on his tomb nothing except his name ; but a wandering Englishman, who heard his story, and recollected the grave of another who died with his work undone, has rudely scratched at the base, near the ground, where the grass half hides it, an epitaph for him—*Plura moliebatur*. And he to’d Big Todd, whom he chanced to find smoking his evening pipe hard by, that it meant “ He had more work in hand.”

“Ay, trust old Jimmy!” said Big Todd, with a curious wave of his great hand towards the grave. Had such a thing been at all in his way, one might have thought it was a benediction.

THE END.

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